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The Three Friends

A STORY OF RUGBY IN THE FORTIES

A.G. BUTLER, M.A.

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THE THREE FRIENDS

A Story of Rugby in the Forties

BY

Arthur Gray
A. G. BUTLER, M.A.

London

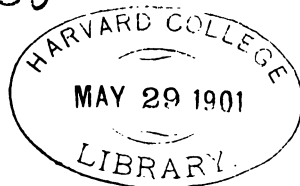
HENRY FROWDE

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE, AMEN CORNER, E.C.

NEW YORK: 91 & 93 FIFTH AVENUE

1900

21426.30



Shapleigh fund

Oxford

HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

Dedicated

TO

GEORGE JOACHIM GOSCHEN

OUR LEADER AT SCHOOL

AND

SINCE THEN, IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

A TRUE LEADER OF MEN

INTRODUCTION

IN this story, hovering between fact and fiction, I have sought to give a picture of the Rugby I knew and loved, at a time subsequent to that described so inimitably in *Tom Brown*. With that work, needless to say, I attempt no rivalry.

It has described, with a charm of sympathetic power, the life of schoolboys full of wild pranks and madcap humours, yet always gentlemen both in language and action. And it has done this with a richness of picturesque incident, graphic dialogue, and interesting character which is unapproachable.

I have attempted to describe rather the ways of older boys at a time when school life had lost something of its picturesqueness and extreme vitality, and when games, becoming more general and compulsory, had furnished a vent for high spirits, once sought in mischief and adventure. Of this absorbing influence of games much might be said. But let those who grumble at athletics consider the gain as well as the loss. Boys are boys, and not bookworms ; and much of their old mischief arose from having nothing else to do. They do

not care to take quiet constitutionals to rest their overworked brains: they prefer to run, leap, climb, catch, kill, and carry off something. And if these adventurous desires have given place to universal cricket, keen House-matches, and the dominion of the Umpire, we must not too much murmur at that which has brought about the change.

On the whole, those who have most experience of athletics will, I think, gladly acknowledge that, in spite of a tendency to professionalism (the result of over-exaltation of the subject in papers and magazines), the balance is decidedly on the right side; and that the old listless, lounging life of so many at School and College is well replaced by the ambition to mount even into a third House Eleven, or the effect needed to get a place, or a *proxime accessit* in a second Fifteen.

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THE THREE FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

THE SIXTH MATCH

ALAN GORDON, called sometimes, North, by his friends (as being a thorough Scotchman), was seated in his study in the School-house, Rugby, on a bright October day in the Forties, evidently in no happy state of mind. His head rested on his hands, his elbows on the table; and before him was a paper on which he had been drawing faces of a boy about his own age, fresh and good-looking, as bright and cheery, as he was downcast and melancholy.

‘How jolly,’ he said at last, ‘to be liked by every one! I wish I could——’

Before he had finished the sentence his door was burst open, and in rushed the friend of whom he was thinking, a boy of about fifteen, tall for his age, with a sunny Greek face, and an expression singularly winning and attractive.

‘I’ve got my “cap,”’ he said, ‘and I’m to play against the Sixth this afternoon. Hurrah!’

But Gordon did not stir, or say anything.

Then said Fleming, the new-comer, 'I say, old chap, ain't you glad?'

'Glad,' answered Gordon, starting up, his strong, somewhat stern, Scotch features flushed with excitement, 'of course I am, awfully glad, but I was thinking of something else. Hark! Do you hear them? That cheering is for you. How jolly it must be to be liked by every one!'

'Well,' said Fleming, 'I suppose so, if you think of it; but I don't think of it. Look here! Where shall I play? Inside the scrimmage, or outside?'

'Oh, outside, of course,' answered Gordon, 'and, if you get a chance, run in! I wish I were playing inside to have a go at Potter for licking you the other day. The great brute! What right had he to touch you merely for being on the Island, just as if you were a fag?'

'Well, three of our fellows have sworn to lame him, if they get a chance. So never you mind, Alan! But what's that you were doing when I came in?'

'Drawing faces, and dreaming, in the dumps!' said Gordon, covering the paper with his hand. And when Fleming pressed to see it, he said, 'It's only the face of a fellow I once knew.'

'You once knew? you old donkey! Why, it's me. What do you mean by once knowing?'

'I never see you now.'

'Humbug! I can't be everywhere. Come along, Alan, and help me to choose my cap, and all the other things!' And off they went, Fleming doing the talking.

That afternoon was no ordinary match. The Sixth had made itself unpopular of late through the over-zeal and roughness of some of its members: and on this day, as hacking was then the rule, many old scores of vengeance, or antipathy, were to be paid. Above all, Potter was singled out for punishment. He was one who gloried in unpopularity, saying that 'as he could not be a jolly fellow, he would be a brute'; and, as such, he pushed his rights as a Preposter to extremes, and caned fellows for the merest trifles. Consequently, there was a conspiracy on foot to pay him off. And certain big Fifth form fellows of the class commonly called 'good hacks,' who, though they did little else in the game, were good in giving and receiving hacks, vowed to give it him. 'Fight neither with small nor great, fight only with the King of Israel,' was their plan of action, and, as Potter had lots of pluck, and was also famous among other things as 'a good hack,' bloody shins on both sides were certain to follow. Those were the times, happily long past, when a rule had to be made (was it not written in a little blue book called 'the Rules of Football'?) that you might not hack and hold a fellow at the same time. No penalty attended the violation of this rule, but public opinion fairly well enforced it. The proscribed practice probably dated from prehistoric times, remotely connected with savage ancestors, and, though it had little real football in it, was long supposed to be one chief glory of the Rugby game.

Now I am not going to describe a football match

in toto, or attempt to vie with Tom Brown's immortal School-house match. As well attempt to write afresh Achilles' vengeance upon Hector, or tell again how Aeneas made Turnus rue it for the death of Pallas,

Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas
Immolat.

So under the walls of windy Troy, and on the plains of Latium, in the very heart of a great contest, raged an implacable vendetta; and so, under the 'windy' elms of the classic Rugby close, did the fatal Three, careless of all meaner ends, pursue their hated victim Potter. The Sixth might win, the School be licked into a cocked hat: but for them the one interest in the game, the one object in the field, was to lame Potter.

It was a close game. The School, having reduced the number of their side till it was about a third more than their opponents, had also to some extent imitated their tactics. Beside the usual full-backs—the Triarii of old—were light skirmishers, answering to the present half-backs, who had to seize the ball when issuing from a scrimmage, and do with it the best they could. Among these Fleming had a place found him, being attached, as a squire to a knight, to Twining, the best half-back on the School side.

And then came that weary waiting-time before kick-off, when the keen player, conscious of a great gap in the region of the waist, shivers with excitement, not with fear, not with cold, not with anxiety as to the result, but with that strange fever of the nerves which seems to

pinch him in the centre, so that the leathern waistband has to be taken in several holes. Wasps, the great fighters of the insect world, have discovered this, and in the course of ages have reduced their waists, the emotional centre of the wasp tribe, to a minimum. Without this they would be tortured by that sense of central hollowness, of which Fleming was now conscious. 'When will they begin?' is always the thought of the young player of fifteen. Till then, however calm outwardly, his nerves are all on fire within. 'When will they end?' is oftener the feeling of his older captain, who sees the forces of his side exhausted, so that, as the evening closes in, they can hardly stay the ball from crossing the line.

At last! The kick is made, the ball is off, and the great scrimmage under the Three Elm Trees, which is to last (in these rude ancient times) for ten minutes, is begun.

Potter, the chief forward of the Sixth, led on his side well. With his short, sturdy, thick-set figure, like a dwarfed Hercules, he wedged his way through his opponents, always on the ball, so long as he could find it; or, if he lost it, forcing a path through to the other side, and returning back to recover it. Little they then thought of tactics, or screwing, or heeling out, or such-like miserable devices of these scientific days. It was one long, dense, determined shove of breast to breast, and shoulder to shoulder, while well-shod boots were dealing savage hacks upon defenceless shins. And above all rose, in the clear frosty air, a human steam,

acceptable, it is to be hoped, to the powers who watch over football, over the breathless contest of youthful pluck and endurance in the well-fought field. And still the scrimmage went on. In such a *mêlée* it was not easy, as may be imagined, for the Three to find out Potter, nor for Potter to be conscious of the fell purpose of the Three. When he did so he did not flinch. Once he came upon their outside member, and, feeling his assault, returned it with a kick—as the other described it afterwards—like that of a mad bullock, and passed on unheeding. One to one, he was more than a match for them. But at last, when in the thickest of the press he met them full in front, then ensued a conflict which we will not describe particularly. Enough to say that all thought of the game, as a game, was forgotten, and the private vendetta was fought out to the bitter end. Even after the scrimmage was over, the fight still continued. And if the wrong done to Fleming was avenged, yet the avengers carried away marks which, however honourable as scars, were none the less painful and disabling. Some of the scars of football, it is said, men carry to their graves.

But to return to the game. To be a good half-back there is needed a quick eye, a light foot, and a lithe body, dissolving as it were into vapour as you meet an opponent's charge, and forming again, with the old onward impetus, on the other side. All these Fleming had in perfection, and, though still too young for any great feats, he again and again executed short

runs or neat kicks into 'touch' ('passing' was then unknown), which earned him the applause of Twining, his immediate superior; once, even a nod and grunt of approval from the head of his side. Then at last came his opportunity. The Sixth that year was weak: most of their old champions had passed away to Oxford and Cambridge; and Potter, though still game and dauntless as ever, had lost much of his first dash and deadly onset owing to his late encounter. Slowly the ball was driven back past the Three Trees, along the touch line, towards the Island goal, until at last a good 'throw out' landed it just at the feet of Twining, who seized it and made a dash for the Sixth goal, closely followed by Fleming. The distance was not great, and shouts of 'Collar him!' 'Strangle him!' 'Hack him over!' rose like a scream, or yell, from the Sixth side, while all their swiftest runners were upon him in an instant. In vain his writhing, in vain his struggles, in vain his wrestling tricks, against the octopus clutch of his pursuers! The goal was not for him. Gripped round the waist by one, throttled round the neck by another, while a third tightly clasped his legs and ankles, he was thrown down, half choked and strangled, on the grass, letting the ball escape him as he fell, which, as it bounded, was snatched up by Fleming, who, after a short swift course of wondrous twists and dodges, like a hunted hare, under the arms, almost through the legs of his opponents, lodged it safely across 'the line.' Then arose—there were no umpires in those days—the usual roar of voices: 'Our

ball!' 'Off side!' 'Yah!' 'Bah!' on this side, and on that, like a pack of hounds fighting over a quartered fox, until the strife was promptly quelled by the Head of the School, a tall dignified person in whiskers, who had a conscience, and a 'try' was awarded to 'the School.' This was, as we now say 'converted,' and, amid wild tumult of enthusiasm, conquerors and conquered changed sides, scowling as they went.

Then occurred an incident of rare mark even in the annals of Rugby. On the Sixth side was a player belonging to the School-house, who, like the Black Knight in *Ivanhoe*, had hitherto taken little part in the game. His cap was new, his jersey untorn, his white trousers unblemished by a stain. He had been into no scrimmage, and made none of those brilliant rushes which are the admiration of lookers on. Standing apart, near to the backs but not one of them, he had often seemed about to get the ball, but, from want of quickness or ill-luck, he had always seen it fall into the hands of another. Nothing as yet had been done by him to justify his House-name of 'the Switcher.' But now at last, when the School, encouraged by success, were pressing the Sixth hard, and seemed near upon a second goal, fortune suddenly favoured him. The ball passing from the scrimmage near to the Barby entrance, by the Headmaster's garden, was kicked by some one (why did he not run with it?) straight for the Sixth goal, where 'the Switcher' was standing. He caught it up, tucked it under his arm, and, starting into sudden life, was off

with the speed of lightning. 'He's off!' 'Look out!' 'Stop him!' the School leaders shouted. They knew their danger. Once give the Switcher his chance, and you might as well try to stop a winner of the Derby. In a moment, running round all obstacles, he had reached the Three Trees; and, though Twining, followed by Fleming, running close behind, clutched him by the jersey, he tore himself from his grasp; and, parrying the attack of the back-player by a push from his long arm, he went through the 'small fry' of the School side, like a hot knife through a pat of butter, and placed the ball between the goal-posts. It was all over in a few seconds, a splendid sprint of over a hundred yards; and when he returned, with head thrown back, fierce look, and proud impatient twitching of the shoulders, he was greeted with acclamations by his own side:

And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.

They had simply watched him, as he ran, in stupid amazement. He was indeed 'the Switcher.' And that run in, the really splendid feature of Rugby football, became proverbial. It had covered the whole distance from goal to goal.

Yet that evening, after the goal was kicked and the combatants retired to their Houses, it was discussed by younger members of the School-house at the passage fires, whether Fleming would not have stopped him had he been two years older. He was close on Twining; and Twining, but for the torn jersey, might have held

him. Anyhow Fleming had made a grand beginning, and the old House had covered itself with glory, on both sides. 'The Sixth,' of course, were a lot of brutes, stuck up, and meddling with everything; but, now that Potter was lamed, even he came in for his share of praise: they could not help admiring his pluck and staunchness: and, as to 'the Switcher,' he might be a brute if he liked, but in none of the other Houses in Rugby was there another 'brute' who could hold a candle to him.

So they yarned on at the passage fire, with a pleasant drowsy sense of having seen something heroic that afternoon, and with a latent joy—it was Saturday—of having no First lesson the next morning. Then, suddenly, a rapid step was heard descending the stairs from the Fifth-form room, which they recognized as the dreaded 'Switcher's,' and vanished, all save one, promptly to their studies: while the loiterer's course was accelerated, as he departed gnawing an apple, by a kick from the great man's slippered toe, and an exhortation to be 'Quick!' This, however, was in character, and was much appreciated. Even the kicked one was proud of the adventure, and did not complain.

Meanwhile Fleming, resisting all invitations to sup elsewhere, was sitting dreamily in Gordon's study, talking over the match, and discussing its prospects in the future. Their friendship had only dropped a stitch, as had so often before happened. Now it was in full work again.

'Glad, Potter caught it!' said Gordon. 'He deserved it.'

'I hate hacking,' replied the other. 'It's not the game.'

'What, not in the Sixth match? All fair in war you know.'

'Perhaps so,' said Fleming, 'but it spoils football. I'll get rid of it some day, if I'm a swell. It's not the game.'

'Well,' said Gordon, 'if hacking is to be given up, who's to begin? You can't explain to a fellow in a scrimmage that you don't like hacking. Of course you don't like it, especially if he's twice your height. But suppose he hacks you, what are you to do? How are you to begin?'

'Oh, the swells will give it up first, and then the thing is done. That's always the way here.'

Yes, and in other places, and other things, my dear boy, if you can only find the true swells, and get them to give up what is bad and out of date, 'the thing is done.' We are all as sheep, and follow where we are well led. But how to find the swells? Ah, there's the difficulty.

Then, as they went up to bed, Gordon said, 'Nothing like a Reserve, quite fresh, on your side, when the others are blown, and tired. That's how battles are won.'

'No,' said Fleming, 'it's not that. It's having a Switcher.'

CHAPTER II

THE RACE FOR THE BAGS

SINCE the Sixth match, there had sprung up a somewhat bitter feeling between the School-house and that of which Potter was Head. Not that Potter was loved there! His roughness, and sometimes savage ways of enforcing discipline, made him unpopular there as elsewhere. But yet they were in a way proud of him; and the attack made on him by the three School-house giants, each of whom he could have tackled singly, was voted low and unsportsmanlike. And so, looking about for means of vengeance, they discovered that the holder of the Hare and Hounds Books in the School-house was no longer worthy of his place, and that they, in sporting phrase, could run a better man. If, indeed, he would run? that was the question. Would he, an easy-going fellow in the Fifth, who did not care for games, submit to go into training, and then, on a day, and at an hour, burst forth upon the astonished gaze of the School-house, and wrest the cross-country blue ribbon from their champion? It was not an easy task to rouse him, for he was fond of his own way, and unambitious of school distinctions. His aim, coming

as he did of a soldier-race, was the battlefield and the army. And yet he was splendidly made for running, with his light figure and springy walk; and some of his feats in running on the hills in Scotland, which had oozed out in conversation, had so excited his friends, that they gave him no rest or peace. Every day they said to him, you ought to do it for the honour of the House, to avenge Potter. And so at last, where appeals to ambition had been powerless, House-feeling, strongest of all magnets, drew him over. He yielded and went into training, three horsey fellows in the Fifth and Twenty acting as his backers. Then ensued all those mysteries of stuffing, and starving; of light-boiled eggs for breakfast, and partly raw meat for dinner; of marmalade permitted, and jam forbidden; of a spin down the Barby Road before First lesson, and a spin up the Barby Road before breakfast; and of many spins afterwards at diverse hours of the day; all of which, though exciting surprise generally in the School, yet remained mysteries to all but the conspirators in Potter's house, who, to the pleasure of the sportsman and the racing man, added the yet greater pleasure of a vendetta, and a conspiracy. It was a noble and patriotic cause, and though Potter was, as in candid moments they agreed, 'a beast,' yet he had been badly treated, and his enemies were also theirs.

And so at length the fated day arrived, when the Harborough Run—the selected course for the great contest—was the fixture, and Langston, the Potter-

avenger, was in prime condition. His eye was bright, his colour good, his sinews like steel, his wind anything from a Highlander's to a greyhound's. And on the morning of the day Fleming, who was late in coming to Gordon's study for preparation of Demosthenes, suddenly rushed in with an excited—

'I say, Alan, such a shame!'

Gordon looked up, a good deal bothered—he had missed Fleming's keener wits in his struggle with the *Leptines*—and said gruffly, 'Well, what's the matter now?'

'Why, those fellows at Carter's have been training up Langston to run against Boosier for the Harborough, and he's sure to win. They say he's done a mile in 4.50.'

'Whew!' said Gordon. 'If it's Langston, we're done. His running at the Highland games last year was first rate: but he never would do anything down here. What's come to him?'

'Oh, it's to avenge Potter. They hate him, but they hate us worse. So they've persuaded Langston to run.'

'And we've got Littleaside after dinner, and Boosier must play. It's hard lines.'

'Then we shall lose the Bags. What a shame!' And the colour rose high in Fleming's cheeks, and he looked, as he did in keener moments, (at other times his face was cold), supremely handsome.

'Well,' said Gordon, 'let's finish this old chap first,

and then we'll talk of the Harborough. Look here, I'll give you a construe down to the place where I stuck. It's a regular teaser. I wanted you awfully, just as you came in.' And so they went at it, Gordon ploughing heavily through the close argument of Demosthenes, with frequent groans, while Fleming, with knitted forehead and roving eye, kept up a devil's tattoo with his feet underneath the table. It was a tremendous sentence, with as many clauses as an Act of Parliament. 'And if on the one hand—or if again on the other—either this person assert this, or that other declare that—or if, in addition to all this—as some say that we say—'

'What a beastly, wordy, long-winded old chap he is,' said Fleming at last, 'I wish we had him to run for the Harborough instead of Boosier.'

'We haven't yet got to the apodosis,' said Gordon.

'Hang the apodosis!' shouted Fleming, 'it's somewhere half a page on. We shall never reach it.'

'Well you look out, ἀντικατήλλαξαν.'

'I can't,' said Fleming, desperately. 'Besides, I know it. It's "they swapped something." By Jove, I wish they'd swap Langston for "the Switcher," just for one day. Now come, Alan! (this in Fleming's most coaxing way) don't you wish it?'

'I've got to find that *εἴτα*, or *δέ* in the apodosis,' answered Gordon, stolidly, 'and I'll sit here till I find it.'

'Well, there it is, then,' said Fleming, 'half a page on, as large as life. I told you so. What's the use of bothering?'

And then they got to talking about the run ; and, being both agreed that the Bags were in danger, they wondered what was to be done.

A sharp knock at the door was now heard, and in came Mackie, cheekiest of fags, who announced—

‘You’ve got to run Bigside, Gordon, this afternoon ; Boosier says so.’ Fleming’s face brightened.

‘Go, and stick in a hole in a hedge, Alan, and swear you can’t get through. It will give old Boosier time to get his second wind.’

Gordon smiled grimly, but said nothing. He was a capital runner for his age. Wind and foot, trained upon the moors of Scotland, never failed him. He could run for ever. But in pace he was a child as yet compared to the great runners, whose large lungs, and supple sinews make racing a second nature.

At last he said, ‘Our only chance is a good fault, or two.’

‘Yes,’ said Fleming, eagerly, ‘let’s stop the scent-tearers. If they’ve only half scent, there are bound to be faults.’ But ‘No,’ he added, ‘that wouldn’t be fair. We must run it out, and—hang it—lose ! Think of that ! All because that fool Boosier will eat pastry at Webbs ! When you have the Books old man——’

‘You shall train me, Flem ; and I won’t eat pastry. It’s a bargain, but time’s up. We must go.’

Second lesson followed, during which Fleming seemed possessed by an evil spirit. He answered wildly, construed ἀντικατήλλαξαν ‘swapped,’ and ἱταμόν ‘a switcher,’

to the amazement of the Form-master, who, like every one else, admired, almost loved him; and ended by taking a stuffed crow from its shelf in the Museum, and passing it round the Form. It went on, amid breathless silence, from hand to hand, while the master was absorbed in looking on, with eyes fixed upon his book, searching for the apodosis. Then, in an evil moment, some one giggled, and the crime was out. The crow was in the hands of one Stammers. 'Three hundred lines, Stammers,' said the master, (Stammers had a trick of blushing, which would have been fatal to Aristides himself) and frowned fiercely.

'Please, sir, I started it,' said Fleming.

'You,' said the master, with an 'Et tu, Brute' look at his favourite. 'What has come to you to-day?' Fleming hung his head. 'Then you do the lines! Or, stay. Why did you (to Stammers) not return the bird to the place it came from?'

'Pl-pl-pl-ea-ea-ea, please, sir,' said the unfortunate Stammers, blushing horribly, 'I-I-I only p-p-passed it on.'

'That will do, Stammers! Any one can see that you had a hand in it. You do the lines also!'

This, however, was too much for Fleming, who went and explained the matter after lesson, presumably to the master's satisfaction, for he remitted Stammers' punishment, and asked Fleming to breakfast, when he brought the lines. But Stammers, who was not asked to breakfast, was heard to murmur words of an old School song,

Where the sausages were many,
And the eggs were none too few.

But the race, the Run, the Harborough Run, so fiercely to be contested, so long to be remembered! Ah, boys, what memories we have for these old days! Horace may be forgotten; Virgil be remembered only in a line, here and there, of immortal music; even those matchless battle-fields of Troy in Homer may fade into oblivion; but these old schoolboy fights and glories, 'quorum pars magna fuimus,' these remain with us, fresh and bright, for ever. We can recall the emotions that we felt, the shouts that we uttered, the joy of victory, and the anguish of defeat, just as vividly as if the past were present to us, as if the 'forty years on' had left no trace of feebleness upon our hearts and memories, as if a thing of youth, which touched our fighting-instincts, and our House-feeling, were, like a thing of beauty, 'a joy for ever.'

Calling-over was done. The hares started at a rattling pace, feeling that the hounds would press them hard. Needless to say that all the School-house, as well as Langston's House, together with large numbers of the School, eager to see the race, went out to Newbold, where, close to the old turnpike, at the end of a long piece of good downhill running, was the 'come in.' Fleming carried Gordon's coat; Mackie, looking like a walking sentry-box, wore Boosier's, who, alas! had eaten oyster patties that morning, and played, in a mild sort of way, Littleaside after dinner. Scouts were then

sent out to signal the approach of the hares, others to wait for the hounds at the top of the long slope, and—if they could—run in with them. The conspirators, the Three, walked apart, much scowled at by the School-house fags, who also exchanged gibes of bitter import with ‘the younger Potterites.’ ‘Why hadn’t they given notice of it? Fed him up on raw beef, did they? and special beer? New pair of best light running-boots! Beastly shame! He’d beat your heads off in a fair race, yah!’

And all the while ‘the Switcher,’ with impatient strides, stalked up and down the road, alone—not even his own House-Sixth ventured to approach him—in a state of suppressed ferment; while Potter, on the other side of the road, moved about stiffly—he was too proud to limp—alone also.

Then suddenly the signal, a white handkerchief on a long stick, was waved at the head of the ‘run in,’ and shortly afterwards the hares came in sight, running all they knew to save their time. ‘Close behind us!’ they shouted. ‘They’ve forced the pace tremendously! All but caught us once. Boosier leading by a yard.’ The School-house cheered, and some offered odds freely on their champion. Then a long lane was cleared through the crowd to let the runners pass, and finally, amid fearful excitement, the signal was once more waved, and the scouts were seen moving down, like straws or leaves before a storm, to get a good start for the run in. Now a figure in white appeared on the crest of the hill,

running like a deer; then another, and then another. They were all close together, the last not more than forty yards behind the first. A good spirt, in one or other, might even now have reversed their order. But, as they drew nearer, a look showed that the race was over. The second runner, however gamely, with his long stride, he might struggle on, was a beaten horse. With that exhausted form, and drooping crest, what chance had he of beating his erect and dashing rival? Still, as the School-house, recognizing their champion, called on him for an effort, he drove himself along by sheer force of will. But it was of no avail.

Amid triumphant shouts on all sides of 'Langston, Langston,' the new winner dashed across the line, and the School-house knew to their sorrow that they had lost the coveted distinction of having the best cross-country runner at Rugby. And so, Potter was avenged, and the three counter-conspirators made happy.

'And it was all along of me,' said Fleming to Gordon, as they walked home together. 'If I'd come off the Island a moment sooner, Potter wouldn't have licked me, and we should still have "the Bags." But how well you ran, old fellow! You'll have "the Bags" yourself some day.'

So apparently thought 'the Switcher' also, who, as he shot past them, called out in his quick, jerky tones, 'Capital, Gordon, you'll be first-rate some day.' This from the unapproachable 'Switcher'! They looked at one another in amazement. And Mackie, who was just

behind them, said, 'What? Did he speak to you? "The Switcher!" Never!' and rushed about to tell the news.

That evening, as in a captured city, there was 'dour' in the School-house. They had been beaten, not on their merits, but by surprise; and yet they could not but feel that it was a great, almost historic, beating. More than half the School were present to witness it; and while their champion, wearied and conditionless, dragged himself in, with scarce a breath left in him, the other came in gay and confident as a stag on Exmoor, pursued (let us say) by a pack of breathless beagles. And yet there were great doubts in high quarters what was to be done about 'the Bags.' It was a single beating, and a surprise beating. Langston was a fellow hitherto unknown to fame, and he had been splendidly trained. Boosier, if he forswore patties and trained carefully, might, with his longer stride and old experience, easily recover his position. So, let him send a challenge to Langston, to run it out—looking on this only as a first heat—a fortnight from that day! Others, on the contrary, thought they had been beaten in a fair race, with the ground good, and no accidents, and they ought, as good sportsmen, to pay up, and try again later on.

But Boosier, how about the unhappy pastry-loving Boosier? He had gone to his study and sate there alone, groaning, with face buried in his hands, feeling like an old lion beaten by a well-grown cub two years his junior, and conscious that he had deserved it. And

the Bags, which lay on his table, and the Book, which lay beside it, what was to be done with them? And he heard some one outside at the passage fire—it was of course Mackie—saying in a loud voice, ‘He won’t give them up, he’s not such a fool.’ And another, later on, said, ‘We never gave Potter notice.’ And the answer came, ‘No, because he was a brute.’

This determined him. He went at once to the Head of the House, the tall, righteous man in whiskers before spoken of, and consulted him. ‘Better send them,’ said the Oracle, ‘and then run him again!’ So this was done, and Bill, the boys’ man, who had felt the defeat keenly, was sent with the Bags and Book to the other House, and also with this accompanying note.

‘DEAR LANGSTON,

‘You ran grandly to-day, and could, I think, have beaten me by a good deal more than you did. Accordingly, I send you the Bags, and give you notice that I challenge you to a fresh trial of strength in the Church-over, a fortnight hence. For various reasons, with which I won’t trouble you, I was off colour to-day.

‘Yours very truly,

‘STEPHEN BOOSIER.’

So the deed was done, applauded by some as sporting, blamed by others as absurd, but the one universal word, sparkling in the eyes, and uttered on the tongues of the School-house, not least by Gordon and Fleming, was ‘Revenge.’

In such sonorous phrase, do boys and nations cover their defeat, and hand on a legacy of hatred to distant generations.

But it was not so to be. If Boosier was generous, so also was his opponent. The next morning, just before Second lesson, an emissary from Potter's House brought back the Book and Bags with a note from Langston.

‘DEAR BOOSIER,

‘I send you back the Bags with many thanks for your kind letter. It will always be a pleasure to me to have come in first in a run like yesterday's, though, after all, as every one knows, it was not a fair trial. And, to tell the truth, I felt awfully queer last night, and don't think training suits me.

‘Yours very truly,

‘CHARLES LANGSTON.

‘I may add that Potter, whom I consulted, approves of my decision.’

And so the affair ended honourably to both parties; and, while Boosier's love of patties received a check, Potter was voted in the School-house to be not such a brute after all.

And thus both the vendettas came to an end; and the war-hatchet was buried between the two Houses.

CHAPTER III

A HIDDEN ROCK

NEXT half-year came with its long dismal weeks from February to Easter ; a time dreaded by masters, and abhorred by schoolboys. For, in the first place, nothing was going on ; only a little fives, hare and hounds, and house-jumping, the last intended mainly to discipline (duck and drench) the new fellows, who come home shivering in wet white trousers, and are thus saved from growing cocky and upsetting. And, secondly, every one, masters included, followed the cue of the weather, and developed gifts for being disagreeable, just for want of something better to do. Worst of all was the annual visitation of epidemics, that took this opportunity of looking up those who had escaped before, and seeing that the great mump-and-measle-tax, so familiar to Englishmen, was duly paid.

They had all returned. Gordon, who came from Scotland a day after the others, was greeted by Fleming with the news that Twining, their constant friend, was in the Sixth, and that they were both promoted into the Fifth, and that each would now have a single study.

'And I'm in top-passage, Alan, with all the swells. Firstrate! Isn't it?'

But Gordon said nothing, only looked grim. The thought of the swells did not please him. Presently, as he unpacked his book-box, he took out a round package, and handed it to Fleming.

'That's for you,' he said, 'real Aberdeen!'

'Shortbread, and Scotland, for ever!' said the other. 'You dear old fellow! But don't you like me to be in top-passage?'

'I'm not a swell,' replied Gordon briefly. 'They're a bad lot, and I don't like them. But how about work? Do we go on as usual?'

'Of course,' said Fleming. 'Except'—he looked embarrassed—'Burdon asked me to work with him sometimes.'

Gordon frowned. Burdon was a noted card-player, with little principle and pleasant manners, just the fellow to attract Fleming, and lead him into mischief.

'Well,' he said at length, 'you'll find the old bear in his den when wanted. Don't quite forget me, Flem!'

'What nonsense!' said Fleming; but he looked uneasy. They had often talked of this card-playing set, who lived apart from the rest of the House, caring nothing for the games, and voted them a lot of beasts. But this Burdon had a way with him, when he liked, half flattering, half caressing, and always graceful, which was attractive to Fleming, who, though a good enough fellow on the whole, when it cost him nothing, yet

adored manners. Like the Greeks, whom he resembled so much in form, he loved beauty first, and virtue, at least in the common sense, a good way second. Just the wrong order, but then he was at heart a Greek.

And so the new departure began from that night. Fleming was drawn into the loose set, of which Burdon was the chief, and soon began to change colour. He saw little of Gordon, and, when he did go to his study, was restless and unnatural. Sometimes they came to words.

'You're so stodgy,' Fleming said one day, 'you can't see the fun of anything unless it's in the School-rules or the Ten Commandments.'

'I hate gambling,' answered Gordon. 'It rots a house worse than anything. Those fellows cheat, lie, bully, and swagger, as if they were real swells, which they are not. How can you stand them?'

'But what can one say, when they ask you to come and play with them?' asked Fleming.

'Say?' said Gordon; 'say No, of course! Think of spoiling your life here for a beast like Burdon!'

And then Fleming broke away, feeling wretched; he had not the strength to break away from them; his life was altered. This new set cared nothing for games; voted all compulsion to play, tyranny; and lived only for suppers, high feeding, betting on horse-races, and cards. Not that they played or betted high! Schoolboy purses are, at their deepest, shallow. But, when out of cash, they borrowed from any one who would trust them; or wrote home lying letters about House subscriptions,

or necessary expenses in the study for more candles, binding books, or other accidental damages. And this was called 'drawing the Governor.'

And then at last, owing to a run of ill-luck at cards, and a bad bet on a horse strongly recommended by Burdon, who had his 'private information,' Fleming found himself with several 'debts of honour,' which he was bound to pay, and no money. He went to Burdon, who flatly refused to lend him anything, reminding him with a smile, that they, 'the Set,' never borrowed of one another. It was bad form. He went to another, who said, he'd think about it; to a third, who would have been delighted, had he not made the same unfortunate mistake about that 'tip of Burdon's,' and recommended him to try 'old Grumps,' a pet name in 'the Set' for Gordon.

So, with shame in his heart, Fleming went to Gordon, told him all his story, and asked for a loan of two pounds.

Gordon looked up from a battle-piece he was drawing of the famous Highlanders caught by French Lancers in the long corn at Quatre Bras, gazed for a moment on his friend, and said, 'So it's come to this! They've plucked you sooner than I expected. The blackguards! But why not write home, and say you are in debt!'

'I can't,' said the other, briefly, 'it would kill my father, who is ill, to know the truth, and I would never lie to him.'

'You cannot lie, but to beg you are—— Stop,' he said, as Fleming was passionately leaving, 'I was a brute.

You shall have the money. There! It's not quite my last penny, but very near it. However, I'll manage somehow. No thanks! But, I say, don't you go with those fellows any more! They're cads, more or less, every one of them.'

This was a long speech for Gordon, who was often called 'the silent one' in the House, but he was strongly moved. Fleming thanked him, took the money, and saying merely, 'I wouldn't take it, Alan, but I must,' squeezed his hand, and turned the subject. They were both too proud, the one to make conditions, the other to accept a favour upon any conditions. Then, as the bell rang for prayers, they went down to Hall. Here a surprise awaited them. When prayers were over, the Headmaster, who was standing, tall, handsome, and dignified as usual, at the top of the Hall, between the Head of the House and Twining, spoke to the assembled House much as follows.

'I am sorry to say that I have heard something which I would not willingly believe of you. There is much gambling, I am informed, in the House, and that of a kind far exceeding the limits usual at public schools. Least of all should I have expected to hear of it in a House where the memory of Dr. Arnold is still revered. It is, let me tell you, a very disgraceful thing. It is (a proud toss of his head) fatal to the character. It makes a boy, even more than a man, false, and mean, and despicable, in all his dealings (Gordon gave a side look at Fleming); and, sooner or later, it is

ruinous to the House, where such practices are tolerated. I warn you therefore (a commanding sweep of the hand) to expect no mercy, if any one after this is detected gambling; and (a look right and left) I count upon the Sixth to aid me in suppressing it.' Then starting, as if stung by something, he turned to Twining, who had been seen to mutter to himself, and saying in dignified tones, 'Twining, will you follow me?' he strode out of the Hall.

What happened in the study was described by Twining afterwards to the friends who waited for his return.

'What did I say to him? Nothing! I only muttered (Twining's whispers had something of 'the breeze' about them) "That we will, old boy," and he heard it. "What happened?" Why, when we got into the study, he turned upon me like a panther,—I shan't forget his look in a hurry—and said, "Yes! what did you mean by that? Is that the way you address your Headmaster?" "And then?" I stammered out something about not dreaming he would hear me. I only meant that I'd do all he asked us, and something more. There was nothing I wouldn't do for the House, and him. "And he?" Cooled down a bit, and, with a slight twinkle in his eye, said, "And do you think that was a—proper—way in which to address me?" "No, sir!" I said, "of course not! I'm awfully sorry; but somehow it slipped out; I've a way of speaking to myself." "And then?" Oh, he turned away. He was laughing, you know, and had to recover himself. Then at last, turning round, he said, "Yes! It's

a bad habit talking to yourself aloud. Don't let it occur again! Good-night!" And out I went, feeling an idiot. Lucky for Burdon, I didn't meet him in the passage.'

With that the whole body of friends exploded with laughter. Even the grave Head of the House, the man with whiskers who loved righteousness, was tempted into a smile. The others almost cried with laughing; the reaction after Tait's speech was too much for them. They had to leave. 'Well,' said Twining to himself, 'Tait's a brick, anyhow, if I'm a fool. Here goes. Fa-a-g!'

A fag came promptly. Twining was worshipped in the House.

'Send Fleming here!' And Fleming came.

'I say,' said Twining, 'what on earth has made you go along with that lot of fellows up there? A mean, low, miserable set of cads and blacklegs! If I could only catch them! You heard what Tait said? Ruining the House! Of course they will. But look here, young 'un, this will never do. You've got to do something for the House when I am gone. You've got to keep the games going, and keep its character up, and all the rest of it. Low in your Form, too, I hear. Of course! Thinking of your blessed betting book! It'll never do. You'll be a leader some day, and then you'll know what I mean. Come now! You bring your books here, and learn in my study, unless you like better to work with Gordon? Well, think it over! Remember, I am your friend, or will be, if you'll let me. As to those fellows——.' And the interview was over.

Fleming was deeply moved, though his calm, fine features gave no outward sign. In his heart he felt the truth of all that had been said that night against 'the Set,' and he resolved, after paying his debts, to be quit of them for ever. It was made the easier by Twining's offer. No one would dare to speak against Twining, whose skill in games made him a general favourite, while for cleverness he was one of the hopes of the School.

However, he slept upon it, and the next morning went to see Gordon, and tell him of his resolve. On his way thither he found a lot of small fellows looking at the passage wall, where was written in large letters, 'Who sneaked? Gordon!' He stopped.

'Who wrote that?' he asked.

'Nobody knows; but every one says it's true,' was the answer. 'Gordon's father was here two days ago, and he must have told Tait. Gordon hates Burdon.'

'It's an infernal lie,' said Fleming, and passed on.

In his study he found his friend sitting with a paper in his hand, and on it written the same words that were on the passage wall. 'Who sneaked? Gordon!'

'The brutes!' said Fleming. 'It's all their doing.'

'Clever,' said Gordon, grimly; 'they say I told my father, and he told Tait. It's like them.'

'Of course it's a lie,' said Fleming, 'but how to prove it? I wonder who it was told Tait.'

Gordon was silent.

'Do you know, Alan?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Who was it?'

Gordon said nothing for some time; then at last he answered, 'You won't tell any one?'

'I won't.'

'Honour bright?'

Fleming nodded.

'Well, it was Mackie told his mother, and she wrote to Tait. Father heard about it from Mrs. Mackie, who learnt it from her son, and he stopped here on his way to Town to tell me, and warn me against them. Of course he asked me no questions, and I never said a word to him.'

'And what if they cut you?' said Fleming.

He had been so used to popularity, that to be cut even by fellows you despise seemed to him a hard trial. Gordon smiled scornfully.

'Oh, I'll manage,' said Gordon. 'If Mackie's a sneak, I'm not going to be a sneak also. Look here Flem!'—showing the Quatre Bras picture finished—'that fellow in the middle, there, was my ancestor. He had a dozen wounds, and yet recovered. So shall I.'

So they parted. The House was in a fever of excitement. Buzzing groups were discussing the matter in the passages. They stopped as Fleming neared them, but went at it again as he passed on. And in the end, from one of those waves of suspicion, which at times pass over boys and men, things turned out as Fleming predicted. The House, that is the majority, who followed one

another blindfold, cut Gordon. He was not liked, and, little as they loved Burdon, they hated sneaks more; and, as Gordon was known to be hot against the whole gaming set for Fleming's sake, 'why shouldn't he have told his father, and his father told Tait? And besides, if he didn't sneak, who did? He was just the fellow to do it. He was so surly looking.' Ergo, he was to be cut, and he was cut, the feeling being carefully nursed by 'the Set,' who had set the lie in motion; and last not least by Mackie, who had been frightened out of his wits, on learning his mother's indiscretion.

On discovering the 'cut,' Gordon's conduct was characteristic. He did not attempt to clear himself, or get into a rage, or swear. Instead of it he went to a butcher who had a lean dog called Scrag, whom he had often fed out of pity, and proposed to hire it. The butcher had no objection; the dog, who was a rare 'varmint dog,' still less; and Scrag and Gordon used to go out hunting water-rats on half-holidays, and have fine sport together. In these expeditions, which reminded Gordon of his Scotch otter-hunting, the habits of the animals being somewhat similar, Fleming, who stuck to him like a leech, was his constant companion. They were also joined before long by one O'Brien, a loose-limbed Irish fellow, with the lightest of hearts and gayest of spirits, who would hunt anything from a rat to an elephant with the keenest pleasure. He was also a cricketer of some mark, and, as such, a friend of Fleming: and like an Irishman, he was always 'agin

the Government.' But in this matter it was the sporting instinct which drew him. And so these three, with Scrags, who had learnt to follow them at a distance to avoid suspicion, had a fine time of it at the river, where—— But this requires another chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ON WATER-RATS

A WATER-RAT, that is a normal, well-behaved water-rat, has three holes, two of them in the bank just above the water-line, and one on 'terra firma,' the three being connected by winding tunnels passing through a central chamber. Crookedness combined with bolt-holes, to be used in case of floods or other dangers, this is the general principle of water-rats' domestic and strategic architecture, and Gordon, who had learnt the system from an old Scotch gamekeeper, imparted it to his friends. It was not necessary to teach Scraggs. He grasped it by intuition; and it was lovely to see him first take a long sniff at the upper hole, which may be called *C*, and, having satisfied himself that the rat was at home, go successively to holes *A* and *B*, and finally place himself in an attitude of attention above the hole nearest to his concealed enemy. Then the game began. Fleming, who was no sportsman, leant against a willow, looking lithe and handsome as a young faun; while Gordon, from hole *C*, proceeded to stir up the rat with a long osier, screwing it sideways and downwards towards the hole where Scraggs was watching. And, lastly, O'Brien,

armed with a stout stick, watched the other hole to drive the rat back if he bolted there. Thus holes *A*, *B*, and *C* were all guarded.

'Look out, Paddy!' Gordon shouted, 'I can't find him: he's coming your way.'

'Ware rat!' cried Paddy, and discharged a thundering whack downward; whereupon the rat, who thought to escape that way from the dreaded Scrag, retreated once more to his central chamber.

'He's an old 'un,' said O'Brien, 'you see if he ain't.'

Then weapons were interchanged, and O'Brien, lying on his stomach and crying 'whish, whish, whish,' screwed away with the osier through his bolt-hole, driving the rat up to Gordon, who as quickly drove it back again; till, at last, nothing was left for the poor beast but to try Scrag. Then a silent flop, followed by a mighty splash, was heard, and Scrag was seen swimming about the pool, snapping at everything, even at the water, but in vain. He had been caught napping, listening to an approaching footstep. The enemy had escaped.

'Hillo!' said a young keeper, suddenly stepping on the scene, 'what's all this about?'

'Rats!' said Gordon, and pointed to one of Scrag's previous victims.

'Well, I never,' said the keeper, 'and that be Mister Tew's dawg, a naring it out there. Did he catch 'un?'

'Yes, caught it as it bolted; he'd have caught another

only he heard you coming,' said O'Brien, who then explained to the astonished keeper their plan of action.

'Well,' said the keeper at last, 'you be born to it: you'll make fust-rate poachers some day. But you oughtn't to be here, gentlemen.'

'And we wouldn't be here,' said O'Brien, 'if there was anything else to do. But, confound it! it's so beastly dull this half. No games, no anything! It's as bad as a workhouse. Look here, keeper! Try some of that.'

He produced a pouch full of tobacco, kept to smoke mice, rats, and wasp-nests in their season, not to speak of other purposes. The keeper sniffed it, pronounced it 'raal good stuff,' lit his pipe, and they were all soon friends.

Then said the keeper, 'Did any of you young gents ever hear of crayfish?'

'No, not at Rugby.'

'Well this is a fust-rate place for 'em, as nobody knows it but me, and if you liked to have a go at 'em some day, here's yer place. They're just beginning to run, after winter. It's rare sport.'

O'Brien's eyes gleamed. There was no living thing he would not have hunted, if he had the chance; and—crayfish! They were as good eating as prawns, nearly. He had read about it in somebody's *Freshwater Fishes*. So he asked the method of the chase.

'Yer takes off yer shoes,' says the keeper, 'where the water's a bit shallow, and feels along the bank for a hole.

Then yer puts yer finger in the hole, and when yer feels a nip, yer pull it out. There's a crayfish at the end of it.'

O'Brien started up: he was off at once to try it: but the keeper stopped him.

'Stay a bit! If yer wants to catch a lot of 'em, a pocket full (his pockets were about the size of a clothes-bag), yer get a landing net, and lay it down there in the shallows, with some bits o' raw meat in't! Then tie a string to either end, and leave it there for a bit! They'll all come to it like young halligaturs. Yer'll get a supper of 'em.'

'And where's the net?' cried O'Brien, eagerly. 'I've got the meat; brought it for old Scrag, who don't deserve it. No, and shan't have it either. Who missed that rat? Down, sir!' And poor Scrag, whose mouth watered at sight of the meat, slunk away ashamed.

'Well,' said the keeper, 'I knows of a net——'

'Get it!' said O'Brien, shortly, 'don't waste precious time!' and proceeded, Scrag eyeing him, to cut up the meat small. Then, on the keeper reappearing, after a few minutes, bringing from a cottage, where he kept it, a round landing-net, they proceeded to set their trap, in which process O'Brien, who went in up to his knees in water, earned the special praises of the keeper.

'He be a good 'un, he be!' he said. And then, after due time of waiting, the net was again drawn out full of black, crawling creatures, over which they all, even Fleming, shouted, while Scrag, who got his nose nipped

by one of them, growled: and then, after tipping the keeper, home they ran, just in time to get their catch cooked for tea, where they lay like young lobsters, red and luscious, a feast for hungry gods.

'My gummy-wummy,' said O'Brien, holding one between his thumb and forefinger, 'did any of you fellows ever see anything like that, for Rugby?'

A dozen fellows, of the better sort, instantly gathered round them. 'What are they?' was the eager question.

'Young halligaturs,' said O'Brien, imitating the keeper, 'himported direct from the West Hindies, all alive, alive! At least they were till lately,' he added softly.

'Bosh,' said one. 'What are they, Flem?'

'Fine young lobsters,' said Fleming, entering into the fun, 'as seen through a microscope, reduced in size, prepared and potted by order of the fine old firm——'

'Humbug,' the other cried. 'What are they, North?' turning to Gordon, 'you've sense at any rate.'

'Crayfish,' said Gordon, shortly, 'try one.'

'But where did you catch them?'

Gordon waved his hand towards the north; Fleming followed, with a graceful sweep eastwards; and O'Brien completed the circle by embracing in both arms the remaining west and south. It was a grand puzzle. 'Barby Hill, Church Lawford, Brownsover, or Clifton Brook—which was it?'

The group of boys stood waiting eagerly for an answer.

'No, my sons,' said O'Brien, with his mouth full, 'you

don't catch a fisherman letting the cat out of the bag. He's not such a fool. But here, come round! There's lots for all.'

And then, over that goodly meal, the 'cut' was forgotten. Old ties of good fellowship reasserted themselves. Gordon told a bright story (not too long) of an otter-hunt, which was like rat-hunting, only not so exciting, because the dogs did it all. Fleming vowed that, after cricket, crayfish-catching was the best fun in the world. And Paddy O'Brien—Paddy was grand. He declared that when he left, and had made his 'pile,' he would come back to Rugby, and set up a store for 'Crayfish! All fresh! our own growth! All alive! Bloater paste was nothing to them!' And when they laughed, he said, 'Bad luck to you, but I'm serious,' and they laughed the more. Only he never let out—trust a fisherman for that—where their spoil came from: and that secret remaineth a secret unto this day.

After this the 'cut' was practically over. To tell the truth it had long been languishing. The reason for it was so slight. The writing on the wall, the 'Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,' of a vile conspiracy, had disappeared, and the conspirators in their turn were suspected. Mackie, who still called out 'Sneak' down Gordon's passage, was told to 'shut up,' and got a good kicking, for his pains. And when, as Gordon and Fleming came out from getting a construe in Twining's study one evening, he was heard, in one of his loud 'asides,' saying to himself, 'They'll run the House yet,' the

whole thing broke down. It was too absurd. One said that Colonel Gordon was about as likely to tell tales as the Duke of Wellington. And when some one asked, 'Who was it then?' O'Brien said he knew; and then, taking him aside, told him, solemnly, 'it was a Russian spy, who had been sent over to bust up Rugby Radicalism. The Czar was afraid of it.' And so, what with jest, and what with earnest, the thing was over. Public opinion, which whoso offends is deemed little better than an atheist, veered round to the other side. And even those who were unconverted, feeling that the Three would soon be in a position to cut them, if they did not take care, kept their suspicions to themselves. 'After all, they were not going to give up three fellows who would soon be A 1 in running, cricket, and football, for those beasts *up* there.'

So Gordon was restored to favour. And, to complete his triumph, Burdon, whose life had long hung by a thread, was sent away for a bad case of 'cabbings,' and lying. 'And the land had rest'; we will not say how long; certainly not 'thirty years.' Thirty days is a good time to elapse in that long dull Easter Term, when games are few and there is nothing to do, without some fresh disturbance. Boys are such restless creatures. They want, as they say, 'something to do.'

And Gordon and Fleming! What of them? Well, as Twining said afterwards to his Tutor—a young Fellow of his College fresh from Oxford, who had watched the incident with great interest, wishing but fearing to

interfere—they were neither of them quite the same after it. Gordon had been unjustly treated, and the iron had entered into his soul. He was more devoted than ever to Fleming, who had stuck by him so faithfully: but he was jealous, fearfully jealous of all his friends. To his moody, even morbid nature, they seemed all bent on corrupting him, or, at all events, of appropriating his friendship; while Fleming, who did not wish to be appropriated by any one, much as he was ashamed of his late weakness, kicked strongly at all restraints upon his liberty. He resented the thought of his indebtedness to Gordon, not yet paid off; and besides, 'he wanted light and colour, which he found' in lighter society than that of his too gloomy, silent friend. And when they quarrelled, which they did about once a week, Gordon would draw a wondrous picture of a green, savage, monster-headed being, having snakes for hair, who sat gazing intently on a graceful departing figure, which figure was that of Fleming. It looked the image of despondency. And when he had done it, he took out his knife and stabbed the monster, one, two, three times, scowling horribly as he did it; and then sat with elbows on the table, his head supported on his hands; and he too looked the very image of despair. But Fleming meanwhile was in O'Brien's study, laughing at his jokes, and, as he oiled a bat or strung a handle, talking of the coming summer; and, when O'Brien asked how Gordon was, he said, 'Oh, poor old Alan, he's in the dumps to-day.'

Then, when Twining had told his friend, the young Tutor, some of the circumstances of this strange friendship, as well as of the late 'cut,' the Tutor said to him, looking fixedly on a small bust of Socrates in the corner, 'Did it ever strike you, Twining, that it is a very good thing, at some time of your life, to be thoroughly unpopular; to be sent to Coventry, in short?'

Twining looked surprised, but said, 'How about Alcibiades, sir, and the Hermae?'

'Hum!' replied the Tutor. 'But then, you know he was half a savage, always mutilating something; witness his dog's tail! But Socrates, my dear fellow! Think of Socrates! Unpopularity—excuse the word—made him what he was; and through him it acted upon Greece, and, through Greece, on the world. It hardened his outer cuticle.'

'I don't think it has done Gordon good,' said Twining, 'it has soured him.'

'Ah, well,' said the Tutor, 'there are exceptions to every rule, of course! But Fleming! He will never forget it. His outer cuticle wanted hardening dreadfully. And when he is, as he will be one day, the idol of the School, this may save him. He will know the value of popularity.'

And the Tutor sighed. He also had known, none better, what it was to be a School hero; and now, with one eye on Twining, the other on his younger favourite, Fleming, perhaps also with an introspective look upon himself, he poured forth his experience.

And then he added sily, 'I should like to make the head of the Eleven wear a hair shirt, or sit in the stocks once a week, on Bigside. It would be a grand thing for him. After all he is a mortal. In the Romish Church, when a monk has preached a great sermon in the morning, they make him lie down at the door of the refectory, and all the monks, with the abbot at their head, tread upon him as they go in to dinner. Just to remind him he's a mortal. Capital plan! Don't you think so?'

'I should think, sir, he'd take it out of some of them afterwards, if he got a chance.'

'Ah, well! That's rather a mundane view of things. But still it might happen. Good-bye!'

CHAPTER V

SUMMER QUARTER

EASTER was past. Boys with pale faces, after mumps and measles, were straggling back to work and to play ; and, as the sun came out—the English sun ‘that cheers but not inebriates’—the moral barometer of the School, that had stood so long at ‘Change,’ rose up once more to ‘Fair.’ For a boy is not a bad beast ; but as O’Brien, who now laid aside his pipe for a season on the shelf behind his dictionary—which he never used—voiced it, ‘he wants something to do.’ And ‘doing’ there was now in plenty at Rugby. Nor were the two friends idle. Once, on a fine evening, as they strolled under the great elms in the Close, just browning and greening into leaf, they heard a piteous voice from above calling for help. It was a little fellow, meant for a midshipmite, who had climbed half-way up the biggest elm after a jackdaw’s nest, and could not get down.

‘Here ! Hold my jacket, Alan !’ said Fleming, and was up after him in an instant.

But how to help him ? Between the branch from which Reefer hung, and that on which Fleming stood, was a clean ten feet fall, and Reefer’s short legs, having

broken away their intermediate foothold, dangled four feet above Fleming's head. There was no time to be lost.

'I can't hold on much longer,' said the little fellow.

'Then drop,' shouted Fleming, 'and I'll catch you.'

And catch him he did, or rather broke his fall, till he stood in trembling safety on their common bough, from which, after taking breath, they descended together. On their reaching the bottom, where a group was assembled—there are always boys everywhere ready to form groups of lookers on—Gordon gave Reefer a good kicking, 'just to remind him'; while the Headmaster's young wife looked over the garden wall and hoped 'no harm was done.'

Fleming smiled and said, lifting his cap, 'No, thank you, only a jackdaw's egg broken!' But, as they went away, he said to Gordon, squeezing his arm, 'I say, old fellow, it was touch and go up there. I was all but over.'

'I wish I'd kicked the little beggar harder,' answered Gordon.

And as they went on nearer to Bigside, Fleming stopped, and said in a low voice, 'What were you thinking of, Alan, when I called to him to drop?'

'Thinking?' answered the other grimly, 'why, what to say at the inquest, to be sure!' And Fleming pressed his arm again: he knew what he meant.

Then changing the subject he pointed to the Headmaster's study window and said, dreamily, 'I wonder

which I would sooner do, hit a ball from here through Tait's window, or get a Second in the Fifth Form Verse to-morrow? Which would you?'

Gordon laughed.

'They'd remember,' Fleming continued, 'a big hit like that much longer than a mere Second. It's a hundred yards.'

'And so would old Tait,' answered Gordon. 'What a wax he'd be in! Do you remember his giving us the whole *Aeneid* to write out for making a row in the bedroom, when Mrs. Tait was ill?'

'And she begged us off,' said Fleming. 'I'd just learnt how to write with six pens, when the good news came. Dear old Tait! with his "Don't let it occur again." What brutes we were!'

And then they discussed the Fifth Form Verse; who were in for it; and what the rumours were; and what the chances.

And Fleming said, 'If I do get anything, it will be all you, Alan. That rearing elephant on the ice-top (the subject was 'Hannibal transit Alpes,') with the old fellow on it, cocking the eye-glass on his bad eye, was killing.' And the other chuckled.

After this the bell rang for lock-up, and they had to go in. After supper as they sate in O'Brien's study, talking over the Old Rugbeian Match, which was to be played shortly, Fleming said suddenly, 'I wonder who'll get his "flannels." There's only one place left. Who is it to be, Paddy?'

'Who?' said O'Brien, 'why, me, of course! Wilson told Twining yesterday he wanted a good-looking fellow in the Eleven; he's so beastly ugly. Ah!' he sighed, 'if I weren't so modest, like all my family, I should have been in long ago.'

And then the others burst out laughing; and Gordon, who had been drawing, held up a rough sketch of a wild Irishman with one hand tearing his shock of hair, with the other pushing away a pair of flannel trousers held out to him by the Captain, known by his high shoulders and hooked nose. And underneath was written, 'Not for me!'

'What a shame!' said O'Brien, 'you'll ruin my prospects, sorr. Will you fight?'

And then, after a little, they all three set to work drawing up imaginary Elevens, in which Fleming figured in Gordon's and O'Brien's lists, and O'Brien in Fleming's.

'Two to one against me,' said O'Brien; 'shure, I told you I was too modest.'

And then he proposed a plan to Fleming of getting a pair of flannels between them on spec, which should be let out an inch round the waist if Fleming got it, and lengthened by an inch if he got it.

'I'm getting thin with waiting,' said O'Brien, softly, and sighed deeply; at which, after patting him on the back till he ached, they went off to learn First lesson.

The next morning there was a great assemblage on the fives-court, under the old Twenty School, to hear the Fifth Form Verse given out. The first name was that of

a well-known scholar, who was well cheered, and congratulated by his admiring friends. The next, after a short pause, was that of a worthy fellow, not much known in the School, who however received the applause which was his due. Then ensued a long interval, and expectation rose to the highest pitch. What could it be? Who were they fighting over? Fleming's friends were wild with excitement. Even he looked a little pale. The crowd grew larger and larger. And Mr. Anstey (most venerable, and beloved of masters), had long passed by into his school, where no one followed him. Then, at last, the door above was heard to open, a stately step slowly descended the well-worn stair, and the Headmaster reappeared. There was a breathless silence. Then came the words—'A third prize has been awarded to Fleming.' Such a roar followed! Such a throwing up of caps and books! His feat of the previous evening had got abroad, much swollen by many imaginations, and had increased his popularity tenfold. And so, with one consent, they all went for him, hoisted him on their shoulders—those at least who first reached him—and bore him about in triumph till both he and they were weary.

When they set him down, the first hand that met his was Gordon's, who looked strangely moved. 'Bravo, Flem! Tait's window next.'

'All your elephant, Alan,' whispered Fleming. 'I knew that would fetch them. Hooray for the old House!'

And the old House gave him a hearty cheer after dinner, O'Brien leading them. And as Twining, who had just met Wilson in the Quad, and heard the news, added, 'One cheer more for his flannels! O'Brien head of the Twenty-two!' the assembled multitude cheered again till the hall was shaken. It seemed they could never make an end of cheering. But, amid it all, Fleming remained outwardly unmoved, enjoying his triumph, but not upset by it. Nothing disturbed him. It seemed as if you could not improve upon his look or manner. Whatever happened, he was always the same pleasing and delightful being. And even now, with one arm resting on Gordon's shoulder, while with the other he leant upon a cricket bat, he looked, young as he was, a model for a sculptor.

'Told you so!' said O'Brien, as they went out into the Close.

'Your turn next, Pat!' was the answer. 'What fun it will be making out the Twenty-two.'

'Ah!' said the other, 'the bhoys will be murdering me, intirely. There's fifty of them want to get it.'

That evening the young Master of whom we have spoken, who was Fleming's Tutor, wrote to his father. He told him first of his son's success in the Verse prize, which was a great distinction to a boy still in the Fifth, not yet promoted into the Twenty. 'But,' he added, 'of course he would have been in the Sixth by now, but for his delicate health before he came to Rugby, which had made it inexpedient to press him; so that we

hope this may be a spur and an encouragement to him in the future.'

And then, after a few remarks on his character, which was 'a little too easy-going and wanting in ambition,' he went on: 'By-the-by, I must also congratulate you on his getting into the Eleven. It has been a very popular selection. I only hope it may not be too much for him. Games and work together are rather a severe strain.'

To this letter came an answer by return of post from Colonel Fleming. It ran as follows:

'MY DEAR SIR,

'I am indeed delighted that my son should have won his spurs at so early an age. I have always felt that the sports of a great Public School are the best foundation of a manly character; and I rejoice to think that he should have thus found his way into the Eleven, and have an opportunity for throwing off that somewhat indolent way of his, which you have so kindly noted.' Then followed the usual story about the Duke of Wellington and the playing-fields at Eton; and the old Colonel went on: 'By the way I am glad also to hear of his having gained a place in, I think you call it, the Fifth Form Verse. It must be a great satisfaction to you and his other Masters, and shows the admirable teaching to which he has been subjected. Latin Verse was never one of my accomplishments, but doubtless it has its uses. At any rate, Hannibal was one of the greatest masters of war.'

'Good heavens,' said the young Tutor, breaking off abruptly, 'and so this is the British parent. Poor Fleming! His father thinks we want to make a muff of him. Saved as by cricket! Saved as by football! Merciful heavens!' And then the Tutor smiled, and thought of his own achievements in old days, in both fields of prowess; and, as a cup won at Henley met his eye, he said to himself: 'After all, which *did* give me the greatest pleasure, that or the Balliol? It was a near thing between them.'

There was a knock at the door. 'Come in!' And in walked Fleming, fresh and smiling, with his poem on Hannibal to be looked over. He looked very happy, and happiness became him. The Tutor's heart went out towards him.

'Ah,' he said, 'you bring your Hannibal, the great half-blind General on his rearing elephant, looking down on Italy! What a man he was!' And then he showed Fleming an old likeness of Hannibal, a massive head of tremendous power, with a fierce wild look, and almost Gorgon hair, and said, 'What do you think of him?'

'A savage: I don't like him,' was the answer.

'And yet he could be gay and gentle sometimes. Remember, he hated Rome, just as Nelson hated the French. And, by-the-by, both lost an eye in their country's service. And Philip too—Philip of Macedon, you remember—he too lost an eye in fighting Athens. Strange! I never thought of it before; but that eye-glass of yours in Hannibal's eye set me thinking.'

Fleming was getting interested. 'That was Gordon's doing,' he said.

'Well, well ! Gordon will be an artist some day, if he works at it. But concentration, Fleming ! Remember, nothing is ever done without concentration. When you're playing, play ; when you're working, work with all your energy ! It's the only way. Bah ! There is so much flabbiness in the world. No wonder it's a failure !'

And then they set to work. It was not the Tutor's way to alter much in a boy's copy. Wholesale corrections, beautiful passages interspersed in Virgilian style, were not, he thought, good for boys. They were beyond them, like feeding young dogs on marrow-bones. His plan was rather 'to amend, and improve the existing poem.' And this was done simply by substituting a word here and there, by pointing out obscurities, and changing a dull spondee for a ringing dactyl, or vice versa ; till the young scholar marvelled to see himself thus transfigured.

'It seems very easy, sir, to make good verses out of bad,' he said.

'Yes, Fleming, about as easy as to hit "sixers,"' said the Tutor. 'You must get the trick of it.'

Only once he permitted himself to infuse a new line, where Hannibal was addressing his soldiers, pointing them to the spoils of Italy.

*Roma jacet longe, spoliis Roma apta, superbis
Detestata viris.*

'Hum,' he muttered, 'rhetorical! "superbis," Silver Latin, doubtful! However!' And then at last, lifting up his head, he said, 'There, you have been very patient.'

'There were some fearful howlers, I'm afraid, sir,' said Fleming.

'Never mind the howlers! My dear fellow, you may howl if you can sing. And really there's a good deal of swing, and poetic feeling, in your verses, which may come to something some day. But I was forgetting. I've not congratulated you on the Eleven. The Eleven! Both on one day! You take away our breath.'

'It was a very near-run thing between me and O'Brien, sir.'

'O'Brien! I shouldn't have thought—— Surely he wants style.'

'That's what we're always telling him; but he says, style don't do in Tipperary. They call it "piffering."'

'Well, he has a good eye, and will make a figure, if he has luck, later on. He would be a famous soldier. But, talking of soldiers, I have just had a letter from your father, to whom I wrote about your double honour, congratulating. He seems much pleased about the Eleven.'

Fleming smiled, 'And don't care much about the Verses, I fear, sir. He wants me to be a soldier. He would have been a fine soldier himself, if he had had the health. He brought me up on stories of forlorn hopes. But my mother——' He stopped and blushed.

'Yes, your mother, does she care for the other thing?'

'Immensely! She loves poetry of all kinds, thinks even Latin verse poetry.'

'Well, poetry and forlorn hopes don't go badly together. And there are many kinds of forlorn hopes in the world, if we only look for them. Only, keep your head cool, and keep steady! If Hannibal had lost his head on that rearing elephant of yours, there would have been no Cannae. Would there?'

'No, sir. And no Zama!'

'Good,' said the Tutor, and stretched out his hand to say, good-bye.

But Fleming's eye was fixed upon the silver cup. 'Did you win that at Henley?' he said, pointing to it.

'Yes!'

'And had you rowed at Putney against Cambridge?'

'Yes!'

'And got a First also?'

'Certainly. All three in the same year.'

'And which did you like best, sir?'

'Ah, my dear boy,' said the Tutor, 'there's no measuring these things. The one excited, the other made me happy. Somewhere between these two extremes the truth lies. But'—and he pressed Fleming's hand warmly—'there is, beside these two, trust me, a yet more excellent way, which I hope you will know some day. And now, good-bye! And good luck to you to-morrow!'

'What a brick he is!' Fleming said to himself, as he went back down the Hillmorton Road. I wonder which he really liked best. I believe it was the cup, though he didn't like to own it.' And then he linked himself on to a friend, who was going down the same way—you always saw Fleming arm in arm with some one—and they talked nothing but cricket, cricket, cricket, all the way to the School-house. Life was very pleasant to him: and when he got to his study, he found there a new bat, 'With best wishes' written on it. 'What a beauty!' he said, and wondered who had sent it. He little thought it was sent to him by his Tutor.

The next day was the day of the great Match, in which, though the Old Rugbeians won, thanks to the swift bowling of their captain, yet Fleming was not undistinguished. He stood up well to the bowling, glancing some of the swift balls off to leg in a way which was much admired, and finally carried out his bat for 'fifteen,' not a bad score for so young a player.

'Where did you learn that "leg-glance"?' said the Old Rugbeian captain to him.

'I don't know,' said Fleming. 'It went off the bat somehow.'

'You'll do,' said the other, and patted him on the back approvingly. 'That last went all the way down to Tait's wall, "somehow."' And Fleming, hearing this, thought of Tait's window, and his talk with Gordon. He was getting on.

Now success acts differently on different minds. Some

it encourages, others it makes conceited. In Fleming's case, the enjoyment of the game, with its companionships, was the feeling uppermost in his mind; and at the same time his keenness to win made him think far more of the whole conduct of his side than of his own little success. He was very critical.

'Why didn't they put on Twining to bowl earlier? He'd have saved the game,' he said to Gordon in the evening. 'And they shifted the field too slowly. It's such wooden play.'

And when Gordon muttered something about 'kangaroos being the sort of thing to please him,' Fleming laughed, and said, 'You'll draw me as a kangaroo some day, Alan, won't you?'

And Gordon smiled. Those were golden happy days for both of them. After all, when the noisy triumphs of the playing-fields are over, there is a quieter, but deeper, pleasure in finding them reflected and re-echoed in the eyes and heart of a friend.

CHAPTER VI

CHANGES

PASSING over the rest of the Summer Half with its great matches and little matches, its House-matches and pie-matches; with its long delicious walks on Sunday evenings to Addison's Bilton, where a grebe once lived and laid an egg; or to the old canal, home of the shrike and moor-hen, and back by the Planks and Avon; and last of all the great and terrible Long-list, in which, thanks to a week of wet weather, and an alarum which woke them early, as well as others who had no wish to be awakened early, both our heroes took a good place in the examination; we find them at last, next half-year, high up in the Twenty, from which they were again promoted in October, owing to special causes, into the Sixth. It was a great advance, and neither of them much liked it. There had been a good deal of friction lately between the Sixth and School, in which, though in the main neutral, they had at times freely criticized the holders of authority; and now here they were, at one jump, on the same quarter-deck with 'the Switcher' and other magnates, with new duties and privileges, which would separate them from their former friends.

It was a great change, and made them feel awkward.

'So sudden!' said Fleming; 'it's like taking a header into deep water, before you can swim. Why not give us a little time to think about it? What will you do,' he said to Alan, 'if so be as we meet old Paddy smoking some day? Set him lines?'

'Strangle him,' said Gordon, grimly, clutching at an imaginary throat. He took a serious view of his new duties.

'Couldn't we look the other way?' murmured Fleming. 'What an ass he was not to get into the Fifth last half.'

'No,' said the other, 'we've got to do it, and the sooner he gets to know it the better. Besides, he's a good old chap. He'll understand.'

Fleming sighed. 'Well, it's a great nuisance, having to break with old friends, not bad ones either, and be a policeman. I wasn't made for it. However——'

'However, we've got to do it, like it or not like it. The House and School have got to be carried on. Just call "Fag," will you?' Fleming knit his forehead a little, but opened the door and in a somewhat wavering voice, very unlike himself, called 'Fa-a-ag!'

The call was scarce audible, and no one came.

They looked at one another, and smiled. Then suddenly a quick step was heard, and in walked O'Brien.

'I just came to have a look at you, to see how you

were getting on. I thought you might be wanting a little good society after your change.'

'You old wretch!' said Fleming, smiling. 'Did you hear me call "Fag" just now?'

'I heard an old sheep baaing away somewhere in the Close,' said O'Brien. 'Why didn't they leave him in his old field? It's the promotion does it. Ba-a-a! There he is again.' And he imitated Fleming's call of 'Fag' so exactly that even Gordon's grimness gave way. They all burst out laughing.

'I say, Paddy,' said Gordon at last, 'we want you to give up smoking. It don't do, you know.'

'Is it my old pipe?' said O'Brien sadly. 'Shure, and you would not have me cut an old friend like that.'

'You must cut it or cut us,' said Gordon shortly. 'There's no help for it.'

'Ah, well, it's a wicked world: but, look here now. You may go and search my whole study, and you won't find it. I defy ye.'

'It's in his pocket,' said Fleming, 'I smell it.' And then tapping his side pocket, he added, 'There it is, I felt it.'

'And wasn't I just bringing it to you, to ask you to keep it for me? I'd be very good if I didn't see it. But you see it's tempting me, the old thing is. I can't resist it. Before I change my mind, take it now!'

Gordon shook his head, and opened the little window wider.

'It would scent the whole passage,' he said. 'Bah!'

'That's what the sheep said,' muttered O'Brien.

'Put it behind the old dictionary!' suggested Fleming.

'And me, who have sworn to look out every word in the dictionary that I don't know, and that's thousands of them! You'll make a villain of me.'

'Wrap it up in paper then, and give it to Mrs. Wixey to keep for you,' urged Gordon in his strong decided manner.

'And she with the fine nose that can scent a puff of an old pipe a mile off!' replied the other. 'I tell you it would poison her.'

'Then fill it with camphor,' answered Gordon; 'she'll take it for one of your stuffed birds, Pat.' For O'Brien was a bit of a naturalist.

'Eugh! The poor old thing,' answered O'Brien, ruefully regarding his pipe, 'it won't know itself with the camphor in it. However, here goes! A sacrifice to friendship!' And he rose to depart. 'You'll be merciful to my little failings, boys,' he added with a comic look, which almost upset them. 'It's mighty hard being good all at once, without even a long stick in my hand to remind me.' And he left them with a shrug of his shoulders, just looking back at Gordon for a last shot. 'Didn't you say that smoking's bad for the wind?'

'Yes,' said Gordon, 'very bad.'

'Ah, then, that's just what my old grandmother once said to me,' and he was gone.

Some few days later on, when the Sixth were at Fourth lesson doing Latin Prose without a dictionary,

which meant not doing much, the Headmaster surprised them all with a long speech on the subject of 'shirking'; the substance of which was that he had long thought it a hindrance rather than a help to discipline, and especially on the Island; and he wished to consult them on the subject. His reasons, briefly, were that it had become, with the lapse of time, wholly unreal, and, much as he respected old customs, he thought it would be best for all that it should be given up.

'He could not see,' he added, 'that it made authority more respected to keep up a mere formality; or that the best way to prevent rules being broken was to make boys run away just far enough to prevent your knowing if they were breaking rules.' Gordon and Fleming thought of O'Brien's pipe, and looked at one another. 'However, he did not wish to make any sudden change, but invited their opinion on the subject' (and he turned to the Head of the School) 'after due consideration.'

The Form stared. This constitutional way of asking their opinion, instead of settling the matter straight off, somewhat puzzled them; but, on the other hand, Tait's words and manner, always weighty, were so specially dignified on this occasion that they felt his speech to be what would now be called 'epoch-making,' and they left the Library awed and impressed.

During the next few days many were the discussions on the proposed change. There were those in the Sixth who thought it an invasion of their privileges, and were dead, or, rather, hot against it. Others, again, who

did really reason, thought that the old practice of 'shirking,' though a form like carrying canes, helped to support and sanction the authority which had to enforce discipline. And these, though more mildly and doubtfully, were rather against the change: especially as it might lead the School to expect more changes in the same direction. But, on the whole, the majority, made up of the more moderate and thinking fellows, reinforced by many of the new-comers, such as Gordon and Fleming, had long begun to doubt the wisdom of some of the old ways, included under the term 'Arnoldism,' and felt there might be a good deal of truth in the taunts, that filtered down to them from the University, that Rugby men were often great prigs. 'They were the victims of a system, once perhaps necessary, which tried to turn boys into men too early. Might not the time have come for easing away the distinction between the Sixth and School, and putting all on a more natural and friendly footing?'

Such were the thoughts of boys and men at that time; and, if I have introduced a page of history into my story (which non-Rugbeians would do well to skip), it is partly to give a glimpse of Tait's mode of dealing with the Preposters, whom, while keeping up their power in essentials, he wished to free from what was unnecessary and out of date.

The thing to note, however, is that his constitutional method of procedure, of consulting the Sixth before 'abating' them of their rights, led—it was thought—to

general discussions on the rights of authority, productive of serious consequences later on.

For Rugby, O my young friends, for whom I write, was then a great debating-shop. There were Levees of the Sixth, Levees of Bigside, Levees, it was said, even of the Fags, in which all matters (such, for instance, as the introduction of a Professional) were discussed with the keenest zest and stubbornest opposition; and scenes, such as are now thought peculiar to a French Chamber, were not infrequent. '*Fiat justitia, ruat coelum*' was shouted by the ardent advocate of liberty. 'If I had heard such language used to me in any other place,' it was retorted, 'I should have thought it cheaply answered by a blow.'

Ah, well! We were young in those days. We were filled, many of us, with the strong wine of Arnold's teaching and example, and the great principles of liberty, then stirring up revolution on the Continent, found a ready hot-bed at Rugby, making us, doubtless, talk great nonsense, though we uttered them with all the vehemence of boys' nature.

It was about this time that O'Brien came into Fleming's study one day and said, 'So ye're all going to have your pigtails cut, I hear. What will the Emperor of China do next?'

'What do you mean?' said Fleming.

'Why, I'm told there's to be no more "shirking," or canes, or punishments; and the Sixth are to black the Fags' boots, and make toast for them.'

'What nonsense! Where did you hear it?'

'Mackie says he heard "the Switcher" saying it to Twining; and when Twining laughed at him, the old "Switcher" romped out of his study, and switched up and down the passage like a madman.'

'Mackie's a little liar; I should like to give him a good licking,' said Fleming, hotly. And then he told his friend what change was really proposed, and added, 'And a good thing too!'

'And is that all?' said O'Brien, with a disappointed look; 'shure, and I was looking for a blazing big row in the School, and was getting ready my ould shillelagh.'

'And which side would you take, Pat?' said Fleming, smiling.

'Ah, then,' said the other, 'I'd pray to be guided.'

'But look here,' he added, more seriously, 'have you got your stick yet?'

'No, but it's ordered.'

'Well, you had better get it. You may want it. There'll be caps of liberty, and "wigs on the green," before long, or my name's not O'Brien. And now, before the old 'shirking' is quite dead and gone, couldn't you come and call me "On," one last time? Just once! This afternoon; you and Alan? I'd like to tell it to my children, for the fun of it.'

Fleming laughed. 'Oh, anything to please you, Pat! But where?'

'Anywhere you like! Barby Road! Just before lock-up! I'd be taking a small whiff of air then, when

my work is over, to get those old gerunds and supines out of my head, for once. They're just buzzing there, sometimes.'

Fleming assented.

'And don't keep me waiting too long for it: or maybe I'll get tired, and let out a few curses at you in Irish.'

'Get out, you rascal!' said Fleming, taking up a big dictionary to hurl at him. But O'Brien bolted.

That evening, as the two friends, with their new sticks, were parading on the Barby Road, they saw a tall figure running hard across the fields to the right, and, as it came near, Gordon said, 'By Jove, it's Pat. Whatever has he been doing?'

And O'Brien it was, looking behind him as he ran, until, reaching the hedge, which he jumped, he recognized his friends, and promptly 'shirked' them. They as promptly call him 'On,' and up he came with his coat torn, his hands bleeding, and looking generally dilapidated.

'Don't say you saw me,' said O'Brien to Fleming, 'if a keeper fellow comes this way!' and then off he darted again, soon vanishing out of sight.

'Whew!' whistled Gordon. 'Another of his mad tricks! He's no more sense than a daddy-longlegs. And look, here comes the keeper.'

They were moving slowly along the road, working homewards, when a middle-aged keeper, panting and blown with running, hailed them from the field, and said:

'Did either of you gents see a young gemman—a

darned young poacher, I call him—with a gun, going this way?’

‘No,’ said Fleming, ‘we haven’t seen any one with a gun. Are you sure it wasn’t a stick he carried, like that yonder?’—pointing to ‘the Switcher,’ who was taking a brisk stroll across the fields to get into condition for the Sixth match.

‘As if I didn’t know a gun from a walking-stick!’ said the keeper, scornfully. ‘And I saw ’im a-shooting too, like a good ’un. Three blessed brace of our birds he had, and if I hadn’t stopped to pick ’em up, as he threw ’em away, I’d have ’ad him too, for all his long legs.’

‘Well,’ said Fleming, ‘we’ve seen no one with a gun go this way. Good-evening.’ And they turned homewards.

‘At his old game!’ said Gordon. ‘Confound him! When will he steady himself? You went rather near the wind with our friend there, Flem. I’m glad he didn’t ask me. But, after all, how could one suspect the fellow of being such a——’

‘Fiend for sport,’ interposed Fleming. ‘Poor old Pat! It’s bred in him. He can’t help it.’

‘Why, in Scotland,’ said Gordon, ‘we should give a fellow two months, at least, for half of this.’

‘Bravo!’ said his friend playfully, ‘what a thing it is to be a laird! The laws are all born in you. I wish they were in me.’

Then, on reaching the School-house, Fleming went

straight to O'Brien's study, and found him patching up his fingers with new stamps, and looking much pleased with himself.

'I'd a splendid time of it,' he said; 'two of the finest coveys you ever saw, and I'd just got well into them, when that beast of a keeper came up. By Jove, I had to run for it, and throw all my darlings to the wolves.'

'You mad old Pat! Whatever led you to go shooting over that land? It's strictly preserved.'

'It was just temptation,' said O'Brien. 'I met ould Murphy on the road with his gun under his arm: and, says he, "There's some fine coveys on Captain W.'s fields, quite untouched." "Ah," said I, "but I've turned over a new leaf, Murphy, I cannot." "They're lying like stones," says he, "this fine weather. Stubbles knee-high and turnips higher!" "And there they lie for me," said I. "Then," said he, "I'll have to go at them, myself." And so, just to save the poor creatur from destruction, I went instead of him, and here I am.'

'And the gun?'

'It's under the better part of a fine two-year-old haystack, stuffed into the soft. Murphy'll find it, never fear!'

'I wasn't thinking of Murphy, but of you. You vowed to turn over a new leaf.'

'And haven't I turned over a new leaf every five minutes, till I got to the last of them? When I met ould Murphy there, there wasn't a leaf left in the whole book. Nothing but the bare cover!'

Fleming laughed. 'Well, keep out of Alan's way! He's in an awful wax about it. To be brought out there, just to tell lies for you to the keeper! It was too bad of you.'

'He's a very serious young man,' said his friend; 'that Gordon. A little shock now and then won't hurt him. No, but seriously,' he added, dropping all his rollicking Irish manner, 'I'm awfully sorry, Flem, if I've got you two into a hobble. You see, I don't think. I just make a jump like a grasshopper, somewhere, and never know where I'll come down. And then, there I am, in a hole. What's to be done? I'll have to enlist, and get drilled, some day. These rules bother me.'

'Well,' said Fleming, 'I'm not the fellow to preach to you, Pat, or to any one; but we've got to obey rules, and to keep the games up, and the House going, and this sort of thing won't do. There now! Do you see that?'

'And I'll do it,' said O'Brien, 'there's my hand on it. But,' and he looked droll, 'if one could only have a bit of a row once a fortnight, like an extra half-holiday, or a Donnybrook Fair, just for the fun of it! My ancestors were all fighting men,' and he gave Fleming a sly look.

'You old wretch,' said his friend, 'you've no more conscience than a stuffed fox.'

'Ah,' replied the other, 'this life in a dovecot will be the death of me. I'd better be clearing out of it altogether.' And there the affair ended.

CHAPTER VII

THE MUTINY, 1848

'My sentence is for war.'

AGAIN an Easter quarter, with its hidden elements of danger! And this time the Headmaster was absent from the helm, lying sick in bed of a fearful illness: so that disturbances, which he would have settled with a few words, brought the School to the very brink of mutiny. It happened in this way.

Tradition is the great force in schools, as in nations. You wear a cap or colour, you bow in passing under a doorway, you press one blade of grass and avoid another, because they—your prehistoric ancestors—once did it; and so you, having yourselves also done it, will make it sad for fags and youngsters who refuse to do it, as boot and toe shall testify. But then, now ~~and~~ again, a great madness seizes upon the governed: ~~and the~~ traditions once gloried in, even by the youngest, ~~become~~ 'anathema' to them, and revolution is at hand. ~~Then fags,~~ who next to street-boys have least power ~~of concerted~~ action, each loving most to bang his ~~father's head~~ against a wall or lamp-post, begin to gather ~~new groups~~ and whisper. Yes, this eleventh plague,

these steam-sirens, these Lower School boys, whose noise disturbs your studious retreat, confusing the Ovidian purity of your Latin Verse, bringing spondees in the wrong place in your Greek Iambics, are now only too quiet. They are in their studies brewing discord, and hatching conspiracy. So it was that Mackie, otherwise 'the Midge,' was heard at this time by 'the Switcher' at the passage fire, outside his study, calmly discussing the question, 'How he would like to be sent away for licking a Sixth fellow?'

It was too much. 'Owgh!' with a roar like an Indian brave, or a wounded tiger, 'the Switcher' dashed open his study door, and pounced upon his unhappy victim. Poor miserable Midge! He was not destroyed: nothing can destroy a midge. But of that fearful moment between him and 'the Switcher' he never spoke afterwards but with bated breath and awe-stricken solemnity. Such was the feeling among the Fags, expressed also by rude sketches on the walls, in which 'the Switcher' often figured, with that favourite word 'beast' attached to it: a term denoting all qualities which we most dislike, from awkward manners down to sheer ferocity. In higher circles of a more literary kind, there was a good deal of sympathy for the fags; and—for revolution and Chartism were in the air—they spoke of the Sixth as the 'Thirty Tyrants,' and darkly hinted at a rising. Above all, such feelings were favoured by many in the Fifth, where a movement for carrying sticks, as a mode of self-assertion against the Sixth, had been lately put down

by the Headmaster. The Fifth then voted that they would play no games, and sulked like Achilles in their tents; but after a while, finding that slow, they returned to their customary amusements, and waited their revenge. Consequently, they too were ready for a row. Thus then, to the student of revolutions, it must be evident that the eternal elements of strife were gathering, and, if sufficient cause should arise, that an outbreak was at hand. That cause was not long wanting. In a recent 'ukase' the wearing of light shooting coats had been forbidden. Decent black or 'subfusc' coats were to be worn by all who gloried in the name of Rugbeian. Accordingly, when a Fag, in a forbidden spot, met a Preposter, wearing the forbidden garment, and was set a punishment by him, he, having all the grievances of his order in his heart, refused to do it; and in this refusal he was supported (*O tempora, O mores!*) not only by certain Sixth fellows in his House, who disliked the other Sixth fellow, but even, let us hope only as a temporary measure, by his Housemaster. So, in plain language, the Fag snapped his fingers at the Preposter. Intolerable! They had already borne certain wrongs and indignities with only a murmur: but now the old Sixth spirit rose up, with a buzz like a nest of angry hornets, and, at a special Levee, it was decided (though many of the wisest of them, notably Twining, protested) that the Fag should be required to do the punishment, on the ground, old as the laws of Lawrence Sheriff, that 'punishment first, appeal afterwards' was the ancient rule and

order of the School. Consequently, when the lines were not forthcoming, the Preposter sent for the Fag, and licked him, and the Sixth applauded it.

So here was a pretty quarrel. Fag on forbidden paths, and Preposter in forbidden garment, both in the wrong! Housemaster, forbidding punishment, without speaking first to Preposter, manifestly in the wrong! Sixth Levee, with its Rhadamanthian justice of 'punishment first and appeal after,' in the wrong also! Most wrong of all, the preposterous use of the cane (forgive the pun) 'to cut the Gordian knot'! But now, who out of all these wrongs was to make a right? Had the Chief, the trusted and loved Headmaster, been there, he would have soon solved the difficulty. He would have done as when the Head of the School respectfully placed upon his table a coming notice, 'Bigside jumping over X's land' (a neighbour who had roughly treated two fellows caught trespassing), 'after calling-over.' He would have said, in his weighty manner, 'Leave the matter in my hands, and I will see that justice is done.' And the quarrel would have been suspended. But he was lying, possibly at death's door, unconscious of the struggle, which had to run its course. Then followed, in quick succession, the unqualified refusal of the masters to recognize Rhadamanthian justice; the degradation of the Preposter; and the rejection of the protest of the Sixth, leaving that respected body sore and angry, and lowered in the estimation of the School. And then, amid the broken respect for authority, and in

the absence of a strong ruler to avert the storm, arose the vision of a mutiny. 'Why should there be a Sixth at all? Why should they submit to petty tyrants, who with grand airs could so abuse their power as to call down upon them rebuke and contumely from the Under Masters? If Paris, if Berlin, could have their revolutions, driving out, or scaring offensive rulers, why should not Rugby have at least a mutiny and a rising?'

It was at this time, when April 10—day famous in the annals of Chartism—had just passed, and the 'Ides' of April were at hand, that Gordon and Fleming were in the former's study discussing the situation. They were young, and were nobodies in the Sixth, but in a silent way had both equally supported Twining. But now that mutterings of the coming storm were heard, they—the dour Scotchman and the genial Southerner—began to diverge. Gordon got him a thicker stick, and drew pictures of a seven-headed Hydra, which Hercules, a stout youth in a neat tie and a subfusc garment, was about to strangle, or decapitate. Fleming, on the contrary, voted the whole thing 'bosh,' and wondered 'what on earth they were all after, when cricket was beginning, and the Old Rugbeian match was so close at hand?' He yawned. Then a knock was heard, and O'Brien entered, his finger on his lips.

'Well,' he said, bubbling with excitement, 'what do you think of it?'

'What?' they both asked.

'It will be the finest faction-fight ever known, if it's

not stopped, and I've engaged a window in New-passage, bless it! looking right down into the Quad to see the fun. Hooray! A good fight! Hoopeddoodledo!

'What do you mean?' asked Gordon, curtly.

'It's as much as my life is worth,' replied the other, 'but for the love of the thing, a good fair fight and no favour, I'll tell you.' And then he gave them, without details, a brief outline of the intended mutiny. No one knew when it was to be; but '*they*' all said that there was to be a mutiny to do away with fagging and all unpleasant things, and that the chief scene of it would be the School Quadrangle. The rest was a mystery.

'And now, Flem, my boy, will you have my shillelagh? It's well oiled; I did it myself; it's a fine implement, well handled, and I would not lend it to every one; but, maybe, it will keep me out of temptation, if you have it?'

'Not I,' said Fleming; 'if there is a fight, I'll go into it naked-handed; but what can we do? The whole thing is so monstrous. I wonder, Pat, you can see any fun in it.'

'Ah,' replied the other, 'I've told them they're all fools and scallywags, but they won't listen to me, and then there is the fun of it. One part of my nature is just starving for a good fight: it's the forbidden fruit.'

'Forbidden fiddlesticks!' said Fleming; 'when you've got cricket, and fives, and the gloves, and singlestick, plenty of games and plenty of fighting, what can you want for more?'

'If they were only forbidden sometimes,' O'Brien answered with a sigh, 'I'd like them better. Or if there were two forbidden fruits, I'd maybe keep straight; I'd be puzzled between them. But oh, whoop,' he cried, 'ye can't alter me, it's a fair fight, and there'll be rare fun in it; and I've given you fair warning.'

And out he rushed, leaving, as Gordon said, a smell of brimstone behind him. Then, while Gordon finished up his Hydra, one of whose heads was suspiciously like the Master who had caused the trouble, Fleming went to look for Twining, then captain of the Eleven, whom he found conning a dirty paper in his study.

Fleming told his story, only suppressing O'Brien's name, and said at the end, 'That's all. Awful rot, isn't it?'

Twining chuckled, and rubbed his hands.

'I see,' he said, 'It's like the old chap who wrote that mysterious letter which blew up the Guy Faux conspiracy. We'll do them. Look here, Flem,' and he tossed him the paper contemptuously, 'that dirty thing was found in the Close, and seems drawn up to show how they mean to do it. We're to be tackled separately by small groups of them. See, four of them against "the Switcher," four against Bullhead, and—confound their impudence!—only three against me!' And Twining gathered himself up, and looked dangerous. 'But then comes your story about the Quad. How does that come in?' Fleming looked interested. The spirit of his order woke in him. 'I have it,' continued Twining, 'they

meet in Quad, listen to some beastly demagogue, and then disperse to seize us in our studies, while we're learning Second lesson. By Jove, yes, that's it. A clever plan, too clever by half for them! There's a lot of those Fifth fellows at the bottom of it, you take your oath!' He stopped, and thought a moment, then went on. 'I say, Flem, my boy, it's a rum place this, where we've got to put down a school mutiny off our own bat. If Tait were well, of course we'd go to him: he'd hit it off at once. But, hang it, no! We can't go to the Masters: they're all divided. And besides, if those fellows go for us, of course we must go for them. Only natural! And, moreover, it may be nothing after all: and we should look precious fools, if we'd gone whining to the Masters about nothing. So I'm off to see some of our fellows, and make all ready. And meanwhile, not a whisper of all this! Mum's the word!' Fleming nodded. 'It's a risky game,' added Twining, 'but we're disciplined, and they are not; and not one of them can be trusted as a leader.' Then once more the young captain, transformed from a 'moderate' into a leader, rubbed his hands and said, 'Well, after all, we've got first innings: we ought to win.'

Two days after, as Fleming was coming in from First lesson to breakfast, a note was slipped into his hand. It ran as follows: 'Look out for yourselves! In Quad! Nine o'clock! Hooray!' There was no signature, and the writing was feigned, but Fleming divined the author. Rushing up therefore into the room where the Sixth

fellows in the House were sitting down to breakfast, he told his story, and, as Twining had prepared them, they were at once eager for the fray.

However, breakfast first, and fighting after, was the word ; and while Twining, grasping a buttered roll and munching as he went, set out to collect his forces, they sat down and ate as boys always would eat, even if chaos were at hand.

Then, as the great School clock struck 'Nine,' they adjourned into the Quadrangle, stick in hand. Only Gordon paused a moment on the way to lock O'Brien into his borrowed study, and then rejoined his friends. It was a strange scene. The Quad was crowded ; in the main by Lower School small boys, but with an admixture of older and bigger fellows : and all these were by consent gathering towards the School pump, from which spot an oration, or word of command, seemed to be expected. But then, in a lucky moment, lucky in the cause of law and order, appeared suddenly that most unexpected and inconvenient body, thought to be at breakfast, of Pre-posters. Few at first, their numbers constantly increased as Twining's detachments came in, and in point of stature, discipline, resolution, they made a formidable appearance. So at least thought the School, who, from facing pump-wards to listen to their Tribune, faced eastwards to see their enemies awaiting them, and evidently did not like the look of it. This was not what they meant. The secret arrest of their much-dreaded enemies in their studies by selected champions was one thing ; the hand-

to-hand encounter with that determined force, led by two prominent sons of Anak, the best Forwards in football, and all armed with sticks, was quite another, and they felt they had been mistaken. Then said old Bumper, one of the sons of Anak, 'Let's go among them!' And in loose column they moved about amid the crowd, the jokes and criticisms usual on such occasions coming wholly from them, and not from the crowd. Then said the son of Anak again, with the cheeriest of voices, 'Let's leave 'em for a bit, and give 'em a chance. Owgh!' And these greater boys, full of the fun of it, wheeled out of the Quad at one gate, going round by the Dunchurch Road, and returning at the other. But still there was the same inaction, the same reluctance to begin. Then rain began to fall, and with an allusion, much enjoyed by both sides, to a similar occurrence on the great April 10, when drenching rain damped the ardour of the Chartists, the two leaders led their followers into the Cloisters, and there walked about, two and two, till the danger was over. Of this indeed, if fully faced, there never had been much. The School had no real grievance; and the whole thing was got up by a few ringleaders, who, in the absence of other amusement in the dull season, thus found a vent for high animal spirits and a taste for melodrama. Only one or two minor incidents remain to be noted. There was one angry moment, when a slight tumult arose near the School-house door, which was dissipated partly by the cry of 'Tait, Tait,' a reminder of the danger of noise to

him in his critical condition ; partly by a dashing inroad of a newly-arrived Master, who was gathering his flock into the Big-school, and who chased Mackie round one of the great pillars in the Cloisters. This incident was much relished and even cheered, like the chase of a small larrikin by a big policeman, and the proceedings ended in laughter and good temper.

That evening, O'Brien, who had raged like a caged lion in his locked study, as the battered door attested, was full of angry denunciation against the mean-spirited creatures who had missed so fine an opportunity, though loud in his admiration of 'the Switcher.' 'Did you see him there, buttoned up, stalking about alone, spoiling for a fight, while you were gathered in your thousands? Wasn't he grand? Ah, if I hadn't been bottled up there, I'd like to have had a word with him myself.'

He was however much comforted later on, when a lively description of the row, sent by him to his grandmother, drew from that good lady a letter full of encomiums—'she was glad to hear he was at last growing so peaceable, and orderly'—and enclosing a five-pound note, from which he regaled his two friends in a scrumptious feast of sausages and oysters. He never knew, till long after, who it was who had imprisoned him ; and the old question, once debated in a great school in the North, 'How many Irish boys would wreck a school?' had no fresh light thrown upon it on this occasion.

And then as Time, the great healer, and all-reconciling

cricket, began to exercise their usual influence, friendly contests, with the sweet click and impact of bat and ball, took the place of the late heated controversies. And when Tait, then happily recovered, walked round the close one bright summer evening, leaning on the arm of his devoted wife, who had nursed him through his danger, down went bat and ball, and, while caps flew into the air, a roaring cheer went up from three hundred voices of welcome and affection.

Till then he had been respected but not loved ; but from this time till the day when the horses were taken out of his carriage, and he was drawn down in triumph to the station, the affection for him went on steadily increasing, and became a real power and source of influence in the School.

Years afterwards, when, at Fulham, he discussed what had happened at Rugby during his illness, it amused him to hear details of the abortive meeting from one who had been present. And his remark, that, 'after all, it was easier and safer to be a bishop than a headmaster,' may show his feeling of the risks and burdens of the latter life, in which 'you are always sitting, as it were, on a volcano, and have to do everything up to time, well or ill, even to a minute.'

CHAPTER VIII

A CHANGE COMETH

A YEAR and more had passed away, and Twining had left, happy in leaving Fleming, now well up in the Sixth, head of the Eleven, and best in football, while Gordon was a first-rate scud, much improved in pace, and wind and pluck as good as ever. He had also made himself a fair cricketer of the 'sticky' order, earning thereby the doubtful praises of the Professional, 'Mr. Gordon, he did swat at it so hard.' But the relations of the two friends were more variable than was quite agreeable. As time went on, and Fleming's grace and charm of manner, together with his skill in games, made him the idol of the School, the difference between them became more strongly marked, and the old friendship had to enter into a new phase. In truth, if the truth must be told, Gordon was too matter-of-fact and cold for his more social and lively friend. He would draw splendid caricatures of some of those who made up Fleming's circle; but, after all, a caricaturist is not always the most pleasant of companions, and the caricaturist of one's friends is apt sometimes to touch a tender spot, and leave a sore behind. So it happened that they

occasionally quarrelled. Both had a strong spice of mother's or father's temper in their composition; and on one occasion, in a football match between North and South, of which sides they were the two leaders, they came to words together, and even, for a moment, to blows—an event long talked of, and creating amazement, almost horror, in the School. Then, as they sat alone in their studies that evening, feeling miserable and unnatural, O'Brien acted as go-between, and after slanging them both roundly as a pair of idiots, got them to come to supper in his study, and, over a dish of rumbled eggs, told them stories about the different ways of cooking eggs taught him by his grandmother, till they both laughed.

'Dear old Pat,' said Fleming at last archly, 'have you really got a grandmother?'

'Not a bit of it,' broke in Gordon, 'she rode away on a broomstick two years ago, and I drew a picture of it. Don't you remember?'

'Hush, boys,' said O'Brien, with a mock pathos in his voice, 'would ye deprive me of my ancestors? If ye would only come to Castle O'Brien ——' This was too much for them. They knew there was no such place. They shouted.

And then, the ice once broken, they slid back into the old familiar ways, and verified O'Brien's saying that 'if it wasn't for Ireland, the gayer partner, Scotland and England would always be at loggerheads. Scotland would want to absorb England, and England would be

awfully bored by Scotland. A pity they can't take things more "aisy" like Paddy."

Thus, in and out, the friendship ranged, with frequent discords like a broken harmony; Gordon worshipping Fleming, and knowing by heart all his scores and averages in cricket, as well as his 'runs in' and goals kicked at football, but Fleming refusing to be tied exclusively to any one friendship, and, seemingly, as fond of dear old Pat, or Tom, or Harry, as of his more devoted friend. The fact is, that these summer friendships have a charm for one who is fond of cricket, which only cricketers can know. To wander, arm in arm, with a couple of friends on a well-kept ground, upon a balmy day; or rest under noble trees, shadowing the rich green sward, is always a pleasure; but when, in reply to your 'What a catch that was!' or 'What a lovely hit!' there comes the immediate, 'By Jove, yes!' or, in shorter phrase, 'Ripping!' from those who have been only a few yards distant at the time, and have felt the thrill of that hit or catch, on which had turned the issue and winning of the match, then that delightful charm of sympathy is present, which in the other case is wanting. The quick response is like the sharp rebound of a new racket ball where the wall is lively, as different as possible from the dull thud of a 'service,' however hard and low, on a dead wall, which seems to take double time in reaching your adversary, and never shoots, quick and fast, home into the corner.

So it was that Fleming, as keen a cricketer as ever

lived, would often make Gordon think himself discarded, though in truth he only yielded to that clannish feeling which makes comrades in war or games stick close together all the world over.

And yet Gordon was of much use to Fleming. He kept the cricket accounts for him, and guarded the money, a service which the less orderly habits of his friend rendered valuable. Also, every now and then he would go to Fleming's study, and tidy up a bit, arranging things in a way more approvable to his artist eye and nature. For books were not meant to lie on the floor, nor bats and balls on tables, above all when your study, all included, measures only seven feet by six. And Fags, when employed as housemaids to clean a study, are apt to be impatient of details.

Then about this time there fell, like a thunderclap, a sudden blow on poor Fleming which changed his life. He had had a cough in the early spring which lasted on into May, and had an unpleasant sound. He was losing weight moreover, as well as appetite, and even confessed to feeling tired by cricket, a thing he would have thought impossible. But of course he thought nothing of it, and went on as usual. The discovery had to come from another quarter.

One day, when having his extra work looked over by the young Tutor before mentioned, the latter turned suddenly to him, on hearing his hollow cough, and said, 'You don't look well, Fleming. What's the matter?' Fleming pooh-poohed it at first, but, after some kindly

pressing, acknowledged he was not well, and the Tutor, who knew about his early delicacy, was alarmed. Suppressing his fears, however, he merely said, 'I am going over to Leamington this afternoon to play tennis; and, as it is an off-day for your cricket, come with me, and see a doctor friend of mine, will you?'

So they went: Fleming was thoroughly overhauled by the doctor, and then, in the presence of the Tutor, was told something of his condition. It was not a cheering account; and the doctor looked serious on hearing that there was lung-delicacy in his patient's family, who had therefore taken up their quarters in South Devon. However, to Fleming himself he merely prescribed complete rest, and abstinence from exciting work of all sorts, and assured him with grave kindness that he must give up cricket-matches, and let his system, for some time at all events, have entire rest.

'For how long?' asked Fleming quickly.

'For six months,' was the reply, 'and then I should like to see you again.'

'For six months!' It seemed a lifetime. The boy quivered all over.

'But at your age,' pursued the doctor in a soothing voice, 'a few months, more or less, need hardly be considered in comparison with a long and useful life. What are six months in hospital to a wounded soldier, when he is thereby restored to an active and honourable career? Patience, my young friend, patience, but no half-measures!'

Then taking leave of his patient, in whom he seemed to be much interested, he said to the Tutor, whom he detained, that 'the case was a critical one, which could have but one end if the mischief in the lungs was not arrested; and that the parents should be at once informed of their son's condition.'

As they walked away, Fleming said in a low voice to his Tutor, 'What did he say to you?'

'You must give up games. There is no choice in the matter.'

'Like Goodwin?' he asked, a well-known case of an athlete who had to leave school and go to Madeira.

'Not, I hope, so bad as that!' replied the other; 'you may stay on at Rugby and enjoy your life there, if you are prudent.'

'I could play quietly,' said Fleming, pleadingly, 'with some one to run for me. Could I not?'

The Tutor shook his head. Then at last, as they were seated in the public garden, the words slipped slowly and mournfully from Fleming's lips, 'Shall I die? Did he mean, I should die?'

'No, a thousand times, no!' said his friend eagerly. 'If you will only live a guarded and careful life for a time, you may grow up to be a strong and serviceable man at no very distant period. But all depends now upon your resolution and strength of mind. Can you face it?'

Fleming looked up, and saw a fly struggling in a spider-

web. Instinctively he raised his stick, and struck the prisoner free. His friend smiled.

‘It would have been all over in a moment,’ said Fleming, ‘if I had left it.’ And then turning with that smile, which men and boys alike found so irresistible, he said, ‘Will you write and tell my father? It will be a sad blow to him. I will do nothing foolish in the meantime.’

So it was agreed that the Tutor, with the consent of the Headmaster, should write to Fleming’s father; and when the two parted, after their return to Rugby, the Tutor said, pressing Fleming’s hand warmly, ‘Remember, I am always your friend, if you will let me; and remember also the doctor’s words, “Patience, and no half-measures.”’

That evening, when Gordon came to his friend’s study, eager for the news, he found a great change. Everything was in order; all the cricket things stored away out of sight, except one favourite bat, which Fleming, who looked pale and exhausted, was nursing fondly on his knees.

‘Well,’ said Gordon inquiringly as he entered, ‘what is it?’

‘No more games, Alan! no more games!’

‘No more ——’

‘No more excitement or hard work of any kind! To live like an oyster, with mouth open, eating and drinking, tide in; to lie quiet, sleeping and digesting, tide out! That’s about it, old fellow. Hard lines, isn’t it?’

And then, as Gordon stood speechless, gazing at him, drinking in his worn look, which he had never before noticed from the brilliancy of his colouring, Fleming said softly:

‘Do you remember, Alan, that seventy-four not out I made with this old bat?’

‘With the “sixer” to square leg—to be sure I do.’

‘Well, I was thinking that if I got well pegged and a new handle, like this poor old thing, I might still be fit again some day.’ And he looked inquiringly at his friend.

‘You? Of course!’ replied Gordon hoarsely. ‘But what is it? Do you believe him?’

‘Yes! He tapped me all over, and stethoscoped me. And then—oh, Alan! He looked awfully grave, just as the other doctor did, when my poor sister died. It’s ——’ his voice choked, he could not finish.

‘What is it?’

‘It threatens to be consumption!’

Gordon groaned. ‘Did he tell you so?’

‘No! but he said I was to do nothing for six months, and then see him again. Just what they said to her! I know what that means. It has always been hanging over me from the first. And now it has come.’

‘But you are so strong. It can’t be true. Didn’t he give hope of some sort?’

Fleming brightened a little. ‘Well, he said I might get strong again, if I did nothing for a long time, and lived by clockwork, like a miserable invalid. To coddle

myself! To live in cotton wool! To run in leading strings! And only eighteen! It's awfully hard.'

Gordon revived a little. 'Oh, if that's all, we'll do him,' (the doctor seemed the enemy, not the disease). 'We'll fight it, step by step, Flem; and you see if we don't win! Hang it all! There never was anything you couldn't do if you tried. And look here, we'll go to the Lodge, our fishing place in Scotland, in the holidays, and catch salmon. It's splendid air there! It would make a cripple run. And you, Flem! A Hercules like you!' (He looked at his friend's figure, so firmly knit, so beautifully made, admiringly.) 'If we don't beat that doctor, yes, beat him in a single innings, I'll drown myself in Bilton Pool.' And away he went to talk it over with O'Brien, and settle on a joint plan of campaign.

When O'Brien first heard the strange news about Fleming, he laughed outright. That any one should be ill for more than a few days, especially 'if he stayed out First lessons, with a note for "No lessons,"' seemed to him so absurd, that he could not treat the matter seriously. Above all, when he thought of Fleming, their leader in all games, Fleming, with his gay spirits and athletic frame, being thus obliged to coddle himself and do nothing, he felt disposed to laugh the thing out of court as a joke of the first water.

But when Gordon, who could (as his old Scotch keeper said of him) 'bring any dog to heel, if yer giv him time,' explained the matter, and reminded him of the death of Fleming's sister, which had happened not

long before, then he rushed, Irish-fashion, to the opposite extreme, and almost cried for grief. He could not imagine what it all meant ; but the fact remained that Fleming had to give up cricket, and they would have to play the rest of their matches, and above all, the match at Lord's, without his famous batting or presiding skill. 'It was awful bad luck,' and, as for dear old Flem himself, he fairly broke down when he thought of him.

However, he entered warmly into Gordon's schemes, and agreed that they would all three spend the summer at Glenshlichachan, and 'he would hold Fleming's rod, gaff his fish, carry his basket, and act generally as his body-guard and big dog, always about him to do his bidding. Nothing he would like so much. Carry ! he would carry Flem himself, if wanted ; he was so beastly strong.'

As to the School at large, the news spread rapidly, and was received with consternation. A good many disbelieved the whole story ; and one son of Anak, before mentioned, proposed to go over to Leamington, and give the doctor a good thrashing. 'What right had he to go frightening people in that way?' Others, the Eleven, suggested that he should have some one to run and field for him, while he only went to the wicket and hit 'sixers.' But to all this Fleming only smiled, and shook his head. He had been to the Headmaster, and heard from him those kind yet strong and earnest words of counsel which, coming from one so lately at

death's door himself, were doubly pathetic and convincing. And he was of too proud a nature to care to talk about himself. He made all necessary arrangements, appointing one to manage the field in great matches, while he looked on ready to advise, if need be; but more often he remained seated on the Island, with a friend, or the young Tutor, beside him, keenly and wistfully noting all the varied changes of the game. It had always been his way to restrain himself. You had to watch him very closely, to guess what was going on within. But yet, wherever he was, the Eleven all felt his presence, and did as they would have done, had he been there to lead them; only, as Pat O'Brien said, 'a good deal better too.'

As to outside feeling, only one brief letter shall be quoted, which expresses well enough the common feeling of the School. It was from Twining.

'— COLLEGE, OXFORD.

'DEAR OLD FELLOW,

'I could hardly believe it, when I heard it. You, the brightest, strongest feather of our wing, torn from us, just when most needed! It is awfully sad for you, for us, for all. It seems as if that big elm down by the School-house were broken by the wind, and only a poor old stump left us in its place. But cheer up, old man! Wherever you are, there'll be always something good to live with and to look at; and, as all your friends here are saying, we'll soon have you up among us, as jolly

and strong as ever ; ready to play against Cambridge, and hit their crack bowling over Lord's pavilion.

‘Hoping to see you soon,

‘Yours affectionately,

‘CYRIL TWINING.’

Moreover, as hero-worship at School is still, happily, not extinct, it may not be amiss to mention, among other humble efforts to comfort the fallen, the offering from a small Fag, in the School-house, of a bait-can full of live roach and gudgeon, in case Fleming wanted bait for fishing. ‘There was an awfully good pike just below the Planks, as big as ——’ Here he kept separating his hands, as imagination kindled, more and more widely apart, until the pike grew to a perfect monster. ‘As big as that,’ at last he said, when he could stretch no farther. And Fleming sent the little fellow away quite happy, with a friendly pat on the shoulder, and a few words of thanks. And let us not forget also Mr. Tew, the butcher, the master of Scrags, who sent up special sweetbreads for him from time to time. ‘Anything to get Mr. Fleming well again ! And the old dawg was always at his service, when wanted !’ In short, human kindness is never rightly known till you are ill. At other times the world gives you a blank cheque ‘to be filled up when needed,’ but with the remark, in passing, ‘We hope it will never be wanted,’ which remark may be understood in divers ways.

But, meanwhile, our hero found himself work—boys

do not mope or moon, if they are worth anything—in many ways. First he set himself to improve the Lower School cricket, instructing a young bowler how to make the ball spin and twist, by artful disposition of the fingers; and, above all, teaching him not to tire or over-bowl himself, which, as O'Brien said, 'was just spoiling all the young thoroughbreds, making them stale and old before their time.'

And the little fellows all thought it was out of kindness to them: 'he at all events did not look on them as merely made to run after balls for their betters!' But he, Fleming, was thinking of the future, of the use these young bloods would be some day to the big Elevens of the House and School, in the great fight with Marylebone, and elsewhere; and of lost matches picked out of the fire by a good defence; and the cheers greeting a successful bowler, when ball after ball is sent down with some trick of pace or break, which beats even the best bat, at a great crisis of the game, when there is only three to tie, and four to win. And then again, sometimes in the long evenings he would amuse himself by teaching Gordon how to hit. This he did, with the aid of the Professional, by bowling him half-volleys to the off and leg, and thus tempting him to give up his defensive policy and let out at them. 'Open your shoulders! Time your ball! Take it on the hop, or volley! There!' All these mysteries or open secrets of cricket, which come so naturally to some boys, had to be learnt by Gordon. He was one of those whose native caution

leads them to think of getting runs as a temptation, and a loose ball as a snare, until they lose the art of punishing altogether. But, under Fleming's tuition, he too acquired a new nature, and, though still what is called 'a stick,' he would at times astonish the bowler by sending him 'out into the country,' so that two Fags were needed to return the ball. Many were the lookers-on on these occasions, glad to see their old favourite alive again; and not the least happy was O'Brien, who called it 'doing the doctor'; but Fleming, who had always said 'Gordon had it in him,' was happiest of all. Add to this the more friendly relations that he brought about between the School-house and other Houses, their hereditary enemies. Some Houses at great Schools always hate one another. It is a sacred tradition, a law of the Medes and Persians, a custom consecrated by time. And when, year after year, they met in battle in October, the old custom found fresh incentive in mutual assaults of hacking matches; until 'those beasts' was the mildest term of reproach in which they thought and spoke of one another; and it was often a surprise in after life to find what good fellows there were among those whom you had regarded as your natural enemies; and what fools you both had been to regard one another with such suspicion and ill-will. All this Fleming helped to soften by interchange of hospitalities, until at last the old hatchet was buried, and the idea of 'natural enemies' gave way to friendliness and intercourse. And this genial method of forgetting sores and grievances

was so successful, that at last O'Brien, chief advocate of hacking and strangling, walked arm in arm with their chief adversary in the Quadrangle, and even stopped to give him glimpses, through the door, of the sacred precincts of the School-house hall. It was not much to look at when seen, but hitherto it had been effectually closed to outsiders, as by a 'great wall of China.' If a ball of any kind went into it, it was at once confiscated. If the thrower of it presumed to follow, he had a tale to tell afterwards which, as Herodotus, the father of history, says, 'it is not lawful to utter.' 'What happened?' 'Oh!' Explanation went no further.

CHAPTER IX

BY-PLAY

THE difference between 'Brutus sick' and 'Brutus well' is, or may be, of small importance to the world at large; but to Brutus it is everything. And, to a school-boy, it is a time never to be forgotten. He remembers that popgun made by him out of an old watch-spring and a stick of elder, with which he shot pins at a cardboard target with a penny stamp for centre. He remembers the almanac he constructed, calculating, to a day and hour, the time of the approaching holidays. And he remembers, most of all, the big wasp coming into his room one day in sleepy September, which he fed on sugar, and taught to be his friend; and the tortoiseshell butterfly, grown serious after its summer revels, which would come and sit upon his finger, and open and shut its wings, for all the world like a Japanese toy. But dearer than all memories are those of the sick-room friends, who came to comfort him as he lay upon his sofa, who would look down his throat to see if he had scarlatina (which would prevent him playing in the great House-match), or feel his swelling jaws to judge if it was incipient mumps. And then their sympathy—feelingly

expressed in the frank phrase 'How awfully ill you look!' and the friendly offer 'to chuck that beastly medicine bottle into an unused garden'; and their quite natural way of tasting his grapes to see 'if they were really ripe': 'it was so hard to be quite sure in such matters'; and their embarrassment, for fear of the matron, as to what to do with the skins! And then the sudden raids of that matron, for the thirteenth time in one day, to drive away the intruders; and the visit of the Master's wife, bright and kindly, as a vision of home, bringing in a ripe peach, or a late lingering flower! All these stick in the memory with the indelible ink of early recollection, when far greater events of active life in school, or on the playground, are forgotten. So that, if it be good to retain memories of the past, amid this dark Lethe-stream of oblivion which swallows up so much that was once great and good, it is well sometimes to be sick, and learn things which at other times you do not learn, and above all to be drawn closer to your friends.

So it was with Fleming. He got to know old friends in a new way, and his friendship with Gordon entered on a new phase. He found him, under the double influence of sympathy and more assured relations, far less moody and reserved than he had been before. Gordon now let himself go more freely in conversation, and, while he was as much interested as ever in his friend's life, he also showed more of his own inner self and feelings. Thus, one evening, as they were walking

by the river-side, he told Fleming the whole story of his elder brother's death by drowning, while saving the life of another. 'He had just brought the fellow to the bank, in a large and deep pool in our river at home: both of them were fearfully exhausted: and then, as with a last effort he pushed his friend to the shore, he himself fell back into the deep stream, and was carried away. I just saw his face, pale as death, as he went under; and there was I, with two heaps of clothes, and Francis half-dead upon the heath, and my brother gone. It killed my mother.'

'And Francis,' asked Fleming, 'did he live?'

'Yes, but it was almost as bad for him as for George. He accused himself so bitterly of his death.'

'Poor old Alan,' said Fleming gently, 'no wonder you are sometimes silent. What a brute I've been to you. I never thought of this.'

'Ah, Flem, I wish you had known my brother; he was twice the fellow I am; as bright and cheery as I am often glum and surly.'

And then they got talking about their future. Both agreed they would like to be soldiers. It was in their blood. Gordon, above all, had been nursed on stories of Waterloo and the Peninsula, till the gallant feats of Highland regiments were as familiar to him as his own family history. But he could not leave his father. And Fleming was fearful as to his health.

'But I can go into the Militia,' said Gordon, 'and make them all volunteer for regulars, if there's a war.'

'And I——' Fleming stopped, and sighed.

'How would you like to be a Master here?' Gordon asked.

'Not clever enough!' said Fleming. 'I could never do that First Class work at Oxford.'

'Oh, couldn't you? You could do anything if you tried; and you'd be up to all the fellows' tricks; and they'd do twice as much for you as for some of the men here.'

'Did you hear of Mat Arnold the other day,' asked Fleming, 'when they brought in news that it was a half-holiday? "Thank Heaven!" he said aloud, and the Form cheered him.'

'He's not the stuff to make a Master of,' said Gordon, grimly. 'Fancy him teaching little chaps *τύπτω*, and the verbs in *μ*! How could he? There's not a bit of the Dominie about him. He's much too great a swell.'

'Oh, he'd do it fast enough if he had to do it,' said Fleming. 'Every one does. Old Pat there'll work like a horse some day, when he's in the army.' Gordon shook his head.

'He'd never be a Fulton,' he said; 'you always feel as if Fulton would do for you just all that ever he could.'

'No,' said Fleming, 'of course there's no one like Fulton as a Master. But Arnold, if he got something he liked, might make you feel—well, something that Fulton couldn't. And he's A 1 at Fives.'

'What a clergyman Fulton would make,' said Gordon,

'in East London! Next to being a soldier, if I were free to do it, I'd be a clergyman. It's the nearest thing to leading a forlorn hope, out and out.'

'Why, that's just what he said to me the other day, or something like it,' said Fleming. 'I wonder if you'd feel it so, when you got to work. A forlorn hope every day would be rather trying.'

'Well, I suppose, my forlorn hope is to try and make the tenants and gillies drink less whisky. They're splendid fellows, but, by Jove, how they drink!'

'Well, Alan, you'll do it if any one can. I couldn't; I could never be serious enough, if they were jolly fellows. But you can, and will.'

So they walked and talked by the river-side with that unconscious self-revelation which is so prophetic in the young, while they watched the slow water-hens leading out their dusky broods by the reed-beds, or the big chub lazily sucking down half-drowned flies in the sluggish stream. They were glad, for once, not to have O'Brien with them. Had he been there he would have drawn a comic picture of Fleming, as a Master, whistling to Scraggs to go out rat-hunting in their old haunts; and of Gordon, as laird, going out stalking with a bearded gillie in a storm of sleet, and celebrating the death of the stag over—cold tea.

Seriousness, with O'Brien near, was impossible. You might as well expect a sleeping-draught from an electric eel.

Some days after this they went up, one memorable

afternoon, to the young Tutor's to eat strawberries, and found him with Matthew Arnold on the lawn engaged in animated discussion. Arnold was lolling back in an easy chair, with a smile upon his face, seemingly watching the light clouds creeping along the summer sky, as he indolently stroked the head of a great staghound sleeping at his side ; while Fulton, erect and keen as usual, seemed intent upon his argument. 'I tell you, Mat,' he said as the friends approached, 'you'll never get little boys to do anything without marks ; it's the only way to rouse them, and keep them up to their work.'

'Ah, my friend Fleming,' said Arnold, turning to the new arrivals, 'you are just in time to mediate between me and Mr. Fulton' (the Mister was uttered somewhat unwillingly) ; 'he says that these little creatures, whom I have the honour of teaching, by a whim of our good Tait, must be treated like young pigs, poked at and prodded everlastingly, till they are taught to squeak intelligibly. What do you say? As one who knows something of these barbarians' (this was said playfully), 'do you believe in the prodding system?'

'In giving them marks,' said the Tutor quietly, 'marks for their place, and special marks for good answers, to stimulate and encourage them.'

'I think,' said Fleming, modestly, 'that the best fellows would get on without marks.'

'Precisely,' said Arnold, 'you would put the clever fellows comfortably at the top of the Form, and feed them with nectar and ambrosia, while stupidity sat

staring at the bottom. That,' he added presently, 'would be my way. Indeed, it is the only way to teach the world. Give wings to the few: the many will pick up a gay feather or two, which the few have moulted.'

'Ah, Mat,' said the Tutor, 'it is just the many we have to do most for. Nectar and ambrosia for the Fifth and Sixth! Something, anything, to awaken appetite for knowledge in the Lower School!'

'Appetite, my dear Fulton! I assure you their appetite is enormous. They gather round me after lesson to know what marks I give them—it's the only thing they care for—with an eagerness, a ferocity, which is quite appalling. If ever I don't return to breakfast, you'll know what has become of me: but, enough! These strawberries are delicious. I observe, by-the-by, you take the smallest ones. I understand. Quite professional! Are they the sweetest?'

'No! But some one—was it you, Arnold?—had already taken the biggest. Pray don't say anything! I understand. Quite instinctive! You always loved distinction.'

The boys smiled. There was a pile mostly of very large strawberries on the poet's plate: but he was not disconcerted. 'I'm afraid,' he said, 'you have me there. They were the "top of the pottle," as they say at Covent-Garden, and that friendly shake of yours showered them all upon me. However, I do like big things, certainly; and this strawberry'—he lifted it up, and looked at it admiringly—'is an imperial one, quite the grand style.

Ripe too all over! I wonder how much of me would ever come to ripeness if I was a Schoolmaster? It is a beauty. Let me present it to you,' and he put it upon Fleming's plate. 'I could never eat it.'

At this moment a man was seen approaching, strongly-built, with a grave, thoughtful look, and expressive eyes that lighted up a somewhat sombre countenance.

'Clough!' shouted the Tutor.

'In the name of the Prophet, Clough!' said Arnold, 'fresh from Oxford damps and metaphysics to breathe real youth and freshness at Rugby! Well! They have not killed me yet, dear, as you said they would: not even their whole school-days and First lessons! Dear creatures! They are very kind to me, on the whole, though they made me an April fool one day. But a plague on pedagogy, when you are here! What is that under your arm?'

'A new book of poems, Mat,' said Clough, simply, 'just out. It marks an era.'

'Yours,' said Arnold, inquiringly, 'yours, beloved?'

'No! something far higher! Something from the highest heaven! It is one of the Immortals.' And he handed him, as he sat down, a little brown volume, from which Arnold read eagerly, *In Memoriam*, A. H. H. No author! Who is A. H. H.?'

'They say it is Arthur Hallam,' replied the other, 'and the author shines out in every line. It must be Tennyson. Read No. 56!'

And then turning to the Tutor and the two boys,

after a few words about Oxford, he fell easily into Rugby talk. He was not a great talker himself, but he loved to hear others talk, and was a sympathetic listener. The boys, especially, interested him; and, as their awe of the great man faded, they chattered away freely, delighted to find that he knew the country even better than themselves. 'He never could understand why Dr. Arnold pooh-poohed Rugby scenery. With the Avon, Aganippe, Barby Hill, and the old canal, not to speak of Naseby, and Combe Abbey near, what could you wish for more?'

Meanwhile, Arnold was heard murmuring to himself, 'Beautiful! Luminous! A new metre! A masterpiece! It must be Alfred.' Then at last turning to Clough, and handing him the book, he said, with faltering voice, all the light playfulness, in which he cloaked real earnestness, departed, 'Read! My voice is wasted with much teaching.' And pointing with his finger, 'There!' And Clough read, in a soft low voice, like far-off music:

Peace; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;
And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
'Adieu, adieu,' for evermore.

'Another,' said Arnold, lying back, and playing with the great staghound's ears, 'another!' And again Clough read, not as picking out favourites, but letting eyes and fingers choose for him, one after another of those immortal poems, which took the heart of England by storm, and have been the delight and strength of the English-speaking race ever since.

And as often as he stopped, Arnold would say, almost in a whisper, 'Another!' till at last, closing the book, Clough said, 'It must be Tennyson. Who else could it be? And his greatest work!—Did you know Hallam, Mat?'

Then Arnold murmured something about 'Immortal!' and, recovering himself with a sigh, replied, 'Hallam? Oh, yes, I saw him once. He was unlike other men. But it needed friendship to understand it. Ah, Clough, when we have that villa in the Caucasus we used to talk of——'

'The Caucasus,' said the young Tutor, starting up. 'Bless me! Why, here we are forgetting Third lesson. Come along!' Arnold groaned, and they all laughed.

Then, as they were breaking up, Miss Fulton came across the grass, carrying a big note-book. 'Here are your marks,' she said to her brother, 'I have just finished them. I thought Tudor would come out first.'

'Exactly,' said Arnold, 'that is just what I would do. Tudor is the first boy in the Form, I should say, and Tudor would appear first. And some other boys ought to be at the bottom—about a dozen of them,' he added,

thoughtfully—‘and they would come out bottom. And so justice would be done, and none of the bother!’

‘But I assure you, Mr. Arnold, I added them up very carefully. I went over them twice.’

‘I am sure you did, Miss Fulton. And fancy and figures happily coincided. How delightful! But I must go. Amid the general decay of virtue at the present moment, let us not forget punctuality, and Third lesson! Good-afternoon!’

The boys went off, vowing Clough and Arnold were both splendid fellows, and *In Memoriam* was the finest poem in the world: quite ‘the top of the pottle,’ as Fleming suggested; and the School bookseller had much to do to supply the demand for it. Not that boys are sentimental. It takes a manly brush so to colour friendship as not to overdo it. But in the picture of Arthur Hallam there was no false sentiment or unreality. And its descriptions of scenery, of Christmas games, of College life, and of the common hopes and joys of men, were all English to the backbone.

And again, who could resist ‘Ring out, wild bells,’ or ‘Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,’ or ‘O somewhere, meek unconscious dove!’? Even the schoolboy was overpowered, and forgot his cricket for an hour. It was something to live and to be young at such a time. Moreover, *Coningsby* had appeared lately; and the picture of a band of friends, carrying out in after life the dreams of progress first conceived at Eton, gave a new importance to School friendships. They seemed

the beginning of a joint work for the national good, in which School heroes would take the lead. 'It was delightful: it was grand: it was stunning.'

There was, doubtless, some exaggeration and nonsense in such a creed; but Disraeli knew how to appeal to the imagination, and his novel treatment of a great subject was attractive to the mind of youth, and caught on.

'I desire,' said a boy of great promise who died early, 'to say now, positively, that nothing in *Coningsby* about school friendships is extravagant or unreal.' It was found, after death, in his diary.

And had he lived longer, he would have seen yet another noble garland of friendship woven by the hands of Matthew Arnold for his friend Clough. College friendships have a great and striking history. They have drawn from Milton and Tennyson (not to mention Shakespeare's immortal Sonnets) some of their finest work, even surpassing that inspired by love. For love is a shy passion, and seeks the shade. Its best is rarely told, save in allegory or in disguise.

But to find School friendships also glorified was a new thing. Of School, in after life, we remember most the madcap pranks, the wild adventures, the reckless jollity. We think of the sly jokes, the booby-traps, the fights with chestnuts, with bolsters, with snowballs, with anything. And no thought of the bumps and bruises, the bloody shins, and broken noses, that followed these mock Thermopylaes, detracts one iota from the pleasure of recalling them. Boys delight to read them over

their study-fires; and grown-up, even old men, greet the record of them, at School-dinners, with loudest laughter and giddiest applause. The fun and frolic of life were then everything; the sadder afterglow of thought and seriousness had scarce begun.

But in *Coningsby* there was struck a higher note. With no loss of fun, or naturalness, a band of friends at Eton (happy Eton, that can have such a foreground for its boyish dreams!) was portrayed as already looking forward to great destinies; with new principles giving fresh life to old-world parties; and with wider sympathies embracing larger notions of a country's good. Even now, when so much of this has been realized in our National life, it is difficult to read without emotion the concluding words of *Coningsby*, when the friends are just started on their upward course.

'They stand now on the threshold of public life. They are in the leash, but in a moment they will be slipped. What will be their fate? Will they maintain in august assemblies and high places the great truths which, in study and in solitude, they have embraced? Or will their courage exhaust itself, their enthusiasm evaporate, their generous impulses yield to the tawdry temptations of a low ambition? Will vanity confound their fortunes, or jealousy wither their sympathies? Or will they remain brave, loyal, and true; refuse to bow before shadows, and worship phrases, sensible alike of the grandeur of their position, and the greatness of their duties; and so restore the happiness of their country,

by believing in their own energies, and daring to be great ?'

From such high ideals it may seem a considerable fall to come down to our three friends. Theirs were far simpler lives, contented with less lofty visions. But in speaking of a great School as it was in the Forties, I wish to show how at that time even ordinary boys were stirred and moved by that spirit of life then awakened in England. All did not feel it in the same way. But the blue of heaven reflected in the lake is also mirrored in the cistern. And boys who have once had ideals kindled in them when young, never wholly forget them afterwards. Many love in life, and love in vain, but 'Tis better to have loved and lost,' than to care only for yourself, and, instead of the poet's ardour, and the prophet's dream, to follow only the cold guidance of a prosaic and commonplace routine. You may lose that higher light, even in the noblest calling, and make nothing of your paltry life ; but you may retain it, and bless God for having it, even amid the colossal temptations of a millionaire.

CHAPTER X

LAST HOURS

THE last day of a last term at school is a time to be remembered. It is quitting a home where you have been more than happy ; an arena where you have learnt your strength, and wrestled, it may be, not in vain for victory ; and the round man, who has there found a round hole exactly to his mind and measure, cannot hope to find so good a hole for some time to come. And this is true, in a special sense, of that exalted personage, the Captain of the Eleven, who has, moreover, a heap of things to settle, including bills, score-books, future fixtures, which have to be handed on and left in order for his successor. And as, being only human, he probably thinks that successor is a fool, he will take pains to impress on him orally, or by writing, what is the only right and proper way of keeping up high-class School and House-cricket, which, of course, like other high-class things, is always in danger of going 'to the dogs.' 'Look here,' he will say to the coming man, 'don't you be in a hurry to choose your team ! Listen to advice, but trust your own judgement ! And don't choose fellows with nerves ! They're no good at Lord's.'

With all this, put pleasantly and well diluted, Fleming had a lively time of it in the morning. In the afternoon, when all things were heavenly-brightest in the summer sky, and dullest-dreariest down below, work and games being alike over, the general slackness was relieved by a long-promised single-wicket match between Fleming and Thomas, who was his second in the Eleven. The Professional did the bowling, and three fellows fielded out for him. It was an interesting match, something like a minuet at a ball, a little stately and too imposing for the common sort; but a large number of the School attended, watching the different styles of the two players with keen interest: and when at last Thomas won by eleven to ten, owing to his forward drives, he was the first to acknowledge that, in a regular match, Fleming would have doubled his score by hits which didn't count, being behind the wicket.

Such also was the verdict of the School, and every one was asking, 'Couldn't he be got to play to-morrow?' And the Seniors of the Eleven, who were in council on the Island, went still farther, and said, 'We must have him. With some one to run and field for him, he wouldn't turn a hair.' But how to manage it? Then suddenly Stammers, our old friend with the stutters, who had just got into the Eleven, and had nerves, and was not much good, was seen approaching. He was, as usual, looking very hot and red-faced, and carried a ginger-beer bottle; whereupon O'Brien started up, and said, 'I have it, boys! Leave it all to me. Stammers!'

'Y-y-yes !'

'How awfully ill you look ! What's the matter with you ?'

'N-n-n-nothing !'

'Have you ever had the measles ?'

'N-never ! I n-never catch anything. But there's a f-fellow in our House has got it.'

'Whew !' O'Brien whistled. 'That looks bad. And, I say, Stammers, you've positively got an eruption out on your face. Don't come near me !'

'It's only the m-midges. Everything b-bites me.'

'Don't tell me !' said O'Brien masterfully. 'Midges don't bite all together like that. Midges run, like a lot of mole-hills, all along the forehead, just under your straw. But you ! look at his cheeks, there ! As red all over as strawberries, with something coming up through them. It's an eruption. Keep away ! Don't come near us ! We've got to play to-morrow.'

And then the other Seniors, seeing the joke, joined in, vowing he looked awfully bad, just about to catch something. 'And so thirsty too ! Just what a fellow always is in measles !' until at last the unfortunate Stammers, almost believing himself ill, was led away by a friend to go and see the doctor, and to learn his fate.

There, it may be said, he found that worthy, always somewhat irascible, much excited by having missed a big country patient through his horse casting a shoe half-way ; and Stammers' confused manner being against him, he was ordered 'to go to bed, or keep quiet, and out of

draughts, or something—confound it, sir! invisible—till his case was more decided.' Poor Stammers! He was too healthy. The doctor did not know him. Such persons, whether before a magistrate or a doctor, always give away their case. The more innocent they are, the more guilty they appear; you could believe anything of them.

'Saved!' said O'Brien, with a great chuckle, in which all joined except Gordon, who shook his head. 'And now for Fleming!'

Of what followed we need not speak. Enough to say that Fleming was over-persuaded, got leave to play, and captained his team brilliantly on the next day.

But in the evening, after all else was over, he and Gordon went out to take their last leave of the Close. It was very peaceful and beautiful, a great contrast to the crowded scene of noise and merriment with which they were familiar.

They did not speak much. Small need to describe the thoughts of boys who have played an important part in school-life when bringing it to a close. If some things bring a blush, or cause a regret, where they might have played a more strenuous and lofty part, there are far more which it is happiness to remember. School triumphs are not easily forgotten, even when we are old. Even Waterloos are said to give less unmixed pleasure than did a first prize or distinction won at school. And even if sometimes there is a little criticism, 'What fools we were then!' or, 'What fools those others were! And what a fine fellow A. was, whom we called a beast! And

what a beast so-and-so was, whom we thought a hero !' Yet, after all, boys are only boys, and do not torture themselves by vague, impossible ideals. And so with few words but many thoughts, Fleming and Gordon wandered on. The air, warm and balmy, was what summer is at its best, when young, before it has got sun-burnt and overheated. A wise summer does not try to ripen the harvest too soon. And then in that dreamy, comfortable repose of a June evening the past came back to them. There was the Slope where they two had played cricket together their first evening : an accidental meeting, but destined to have a lasting influence on their lives. There too, close by, was the scene of Fleming's first memorable run-in. And Twining, and Potter, and the great 'Switcher' all came back to them, vivid and clear as in a Landseer picture, just as if it were yesterday. Even the shouts and cheers, and the 'Well run ! well run !' or at least the ghosts of them, seemed stirring in the branches of the mighty elms ; as if they, ancient guardians of the Close, were also the watchers and recorders of the deeds done there. Above all, there was the great elm, greatest of all, where Fleming once risked his life to save another's, all for a jackdaw's egg. And now the old place, silent and deserted, was empty of the busy throng that played and fought there, but full of memories, haunted by familiar names and faces, rich and beautiful in its summer garb of rustling green. The sheep too, banished at other times into corners, were browsing up to the School-windows where the grass

was longest. They now had come into their full inheritance. To them also it was a loved though a disputed possession. And lastly, their old friends the rooks, older than the School itself, were sitting serene upon the tree tops, no longer croaking over 'savage boys,' and 'beastly cricket-balls,' but letting out only an occasional 'Caw, caw,' of perfect satisfaction, as if they also knew that the holidays were come. Rooks are like a Greek chorus. They express, sententiously, the feelings of the general spectator.

'Well,' said Fleming at last, 'it is a jolly place. I wish we had to live it all over again.'

But Gordon shook his head. He could not say 'all.' Life had not been so smooth and easy to him as to his friend, and he felt a want of bigger scenes, with more action and adventure.

'I want to be doing something,' he said at last, 'not play.'

And as he hummed the old Highland tune that sets Scotch blood dancing, 'I hear the pibrochs sounding, sounding,' his look was set and stern, and he clenched his hand, as if the cry of 'Claymores' was in the air.

Fleming smiled. 'What fighters you all are, Alan! So are we in a way. But I can't think of it now, not on this evening. Besides, if one could do it all again, there are some things one would do differently.'

And then Gordon felt he had been a brute. Of course Fleming couldn't look on things as he did.

'I'm very Scotch,' he said; 'we're always looking on,

and always fighting. We had so little to start with, you know. You took it all from us. And we have had to live somehow, and get on by fighting.'

Then suddenly, as they looked up, they saw a tall figure approaching, seemingly absorbed in a book.

'Fulton,' said Gordon.

'Ah,' he said, as he looked up on reaching their seat upon a bench, 'so you too are enjoying the last evening. Taking leave of the old Close! How quiet it is! Even the rooks are silent. Dull, I should think, it must seem to you.'

'Dull,' said Fleming, 'I wish we were to have it over again.'

'Do you? Well, I suppose I did the same at your age. But now I'm like the painter, who didn't like looking at his old pictures. He had moved on.'

'I don't want to move on,' said Fleming.

'I do,' said Gordon.

'The third way,' said the Tutor, 'is just to live for the day, and then forget it. It's rather a prosy way, but it suits a schoolmaster. We should be wretched otherwise, losing so many old friends and pupils every year.'

'I should have thought,' said Gordon, 'you'd be very glad to be rid of some of us.'

The Tutor smiled and shook his head. Evidently he did not wish to be rid of them.

'Well,' he said at last, 'you must often come and see us. Bring us the last new thing from Oxford, and keep us from getting rusty. It's our danger here. By-the-by,

I forgot to tell you that you had both done well in examination. Your scholarship, Fleming, and your general work, Gordon, were much approved of.' The boys looked pleased. 'Did you think you had done well?'

'I never know,' said Gordon. 'When I do know a thing it seems so awfully easy, I think that every one must know it.'

'And I,' said Fleming, 'am always thinking of my howlers. I make so many of them.'

'Ah, but a good examiner does not think too much of howlers. Every one makes them. A paper may be a good paper in spite of many blemishes. It's like a good innings at cricket, where the good hits and sixers make up for a few bad mistakes. Is it not so?'

'Yes,' said Fleming, smiling, 'but unfortunately one mistake at cricket may be fatal at the start; you may get snapped up at slip, or at the wicket, and then the fine hits never come off.'

'You have me there,' said the Tutor. 'It's never wise to choose your similes from your opponent's profession. But you will understand me better if I say, that a translation which shows real literary feeling will often get at the heart of the passage, even though it want much in soundness and depth of scholarship.'

'That's what O'Brien is always saying,' said Gordon. 'It's my literary feeling,' he says, 'tells me the meaning of that word. I'll not look it out. I'll chance it.'

'Does he? The rascal! And yet he too has done

well in something. They say he shows real power in mathematics. I fear we have not made enough of him here. He seems to have quite a genius for mechanics.' And he sighed, thinking that idleness is often only undeveloped talent. The wrecks of school-life might have been famous ocean-crossers, and record-breakers, under wiser management. Then, as the locking-up bell sounded, the two friends shook hands warmly with the Tutor, thanking him earnestly for all his great kindness. 'They would never forget it.'

'Don't speak of it,' was the answer, 'but remember'—his voice faltered a little—'I would — There are few things I would not do for either of you, if ever you want it. But'—and he looked wistfully at Fleming—'the first thing is to get well and strong. In the race of life no allowance is made for weak health. It is an even race, and not a handicap. So once more, no half-measures!'

And then they parted.

'What a man he is!' said Fleming. 'Couldn't you get him to come and join us in Scotland?'

'I'm not sure,' said Gordon thoughtfully; 'he's almost too big a man for us. When I was ordering the gillies I should be always wondering whether he liked it. Our people wouldn't quite understand. But I'll ask my father.'

On getting to the House, they found O'Brien in a state of rapture over his pipe, which he had just dug out of a hole in his study wall, where he had buried it.

'The beauty!' he said, and kissed it. 'We'll never part again.'

They laughed, and asked him what he thought of getting Fulton to join them in Scotland? O'Brien's face fell.

'And where would I be?' he said. 'With your Wordsworth, and your love of Nature, and your Happy Warrior! Me, who haven't yet got beyond my love of poaching, like a happy rapparee! And then, the long tail of Tipperary boys I was for bringing to fight your Highlanders, Alan, number for number! Oh, murder, murder! there'll be no fun at all, if we have him there, nor for him either. He'll be like a fish up a tree, or a cow out of clover, on the moors. By my soul, he will. And he'll be always saying to me, "*Malé*, O'Brien, in composition, governs a dative." Ah, then, let us be boys a little longer, and enjoy ourselves like gentlemen! When I'm a soldier, I'll be frightfully in earnest. I'll be weighing my fat major in his kit, boots and all, like the old Duke; and he was a Paddy too, God bless him! And mind you, boys, I don't mean to be a fool always. I'll want to be mentioned in dispatches, and get stars, and crosses, and good appointments, and all that sort of thing, some day. Here I'm always wanting to smash up something, just for want of some excitement, and better to do.'

'Nonsense, Pat,' said Fleming, 'you don't know Fulton. Just you get him to talk about Oxford, some day when he's off duty! He'll electrify you. Besides,'

he added quietly, 'you don't know what he has been to me.'

'Don't doubt it,' said O'Brien, drolly, 'but I'm still a savage, you see, three parts of me. How could I ever light my old pipe before him, when he'd see it was an old friend' (O'Brien kissed it) 'by its colour? Why, I should feel a shiver all down my backbone, and think of paying a visit to the Headmaster, next morning, where ——'

Here followed an expressive bit of pantomime, which set them both laughing. And as O'Brien had once been flogged for killing a goose with a catapult, meaning to shoot just one inch above the creature's head, he was an authority on such subjects. And indeed O'Brien is not the only person who has felt the like cold shiver down his backbone when he met his former Tutor. If stories be true, more than one grim moustachoeed old Colonel, who has faced Afridi sangars without flinching, has felt the same cold shiver, and put away his habitual cheroot, when suddenly the well-known form of his respected Headmaster came sailing round a corner.

'Besides,' said O'Brien, 'I'd never hit a haystack, let alone a blackcock, if he were looking on. I'd be always thinking, "*Malē* governs a dative!" Hang it! He'd look it, if he didn't say it, bother him! Ah then, Alan dear, don't be bothering about Fulton! Let's wait till we really want him! keep him for an emergency, like the whisky bottle!'

And so it was agreed; though Alan protested that,

among the hills and heather, Fulton would be as young as any of them, perhaps more so.

'He had often seen him stroke his hand over his face, when work was over, as if pulling off a mask ; and then he seemed ready for anything, ready to romp over his garden-gate, or even, like O'Brien himself, "ready to smash up something," just for want of something better to do.' But this was not known or seen of all.

Then, 'last scene of all in this strange history,' came other leave-takings. Little fellows came shyly to Fleming, to shake hands with him, and take their leave. One brought him an old Latin Grammar illustrated by Gordon, in which the various tenses of the verb 'amo' represented cricketers in different stages. The 'Imperfect' was a slogger, mowing round with his bat, as if it was a scythe, while his wickets were tumbling behind him. The 'Perfect' was a knowing young person, with his head in air, ordering off some one 'who obstructed his light.' It is only in the Eleven that you talk of 'light,' and such like luxuries. The common sort have to be content with what they can get. But the 'Plusquam Perfectum' was a graceful figure, suspiciously like Fleming, with a fine sweep of arm and shoulder, hitting the ball square down to the Bath ; and over it was written 'An easy sixer.'

'I found it,' said the little fellow. 'May I keep it?'

And Fleming smiled, and said, 'Yes, but ask Gordon.' Another fellow had cut Fleming's name on a school desk, and had thereby lost many knives, confiscated by

the watchful Form-master. Another had made a cave, alas ! in the Hall-table, and buried there a House-list, with his hero's name emblazoned, carefully replacing the oak-lid, so that 'it would never be noticed.' All had done something for their hero, and done it without thinking of reward.

And to each and all Fleming had a kind word and smile ; and said something about keeping up the old House, which, coming from him, meant to his young hearers doing their living best to make it A 1 in everything. Such words, at such a time, have their effect. Fleming was not a boy of brilliant cleverness or great force of character ; but there was in him a simplicity, and charm of manner, which, combined with his skill in games and kindness to little fellows, without spoiling them, made them ready to black his boots, or—better still—stand more firmly in their own shoes, and put their backs into everything which makes for manliness and good living. And his love of the House found an echo in all hearts. They knew what he had done for it, without swagger and without brag, and they understood that they were to do likewise.

'If they didn't, then ——' Well, they felt as if he would come back some day, like a Barbarossa, or Rip Van Winkle, or other great heroes of old time, and give them all such a dressing as would make every loungee, and bully, and 'slacker' hide away under tables, or cower behind moth-eaten old curtains and sofas in the Bottom-passage. What could such miserable creatures

do before one who had thrown a cricket-ball a hundred and ten yards; who had thrashed an ex-prize-fighter, turned policeman; and, not to speak of sixers hit habitually to the Bath, had jumped through the ropes of a swing, right over the old Island moat, when at its fullest and broadest? The old House! If Demosthenes could swear a big oath by the shades of Marathon and Salamis, to shame the pitiful Athenians of his own day, surely they too had known something of a golden age, which would rise up against them if unfaithful. And yet of all this Fleming felt little or nothing. He knew the fellows liked him, and he enjoyed his popularity. Who does not? But he never went out of his way to seek it. He was too modest, too sensible and simple by nature, as all good heroes should be; and his worst enemy, if he had one, could never say of him that he had laboured for praise or power; or, as our poet says, 'sold the truth to serve the hour'; or done any of those foolish things which men and boys will do out of vanity and self-seeking. The fact was, as poor harum-scarum O'Brien once said of him, 'He was such a beggar for style, you could never satisfy him.'

In other words, he was something of a Greek by nature, and had all-round ideals which kept him out of lower ways. And though he spoke of these only as 'playing the game,' or 'good form,' he really meant much more than he said. Boys generally say about one-tenth of what they mean, or even quite the opposite. It never does to take them too seriously. Their very

words of praise, such as the time-honoured 'awfully jolly,' though applied to such different things as a new friend or a new waistcoat, merely mean that they like and admire both of them. They have not yet learnt all the fine-spun, many-shaded epithets which, in a *Gradus*, are found applicable to 'vestis' and 'amicus.' The knowledge of these only comes with age and the growth of taste.

But Fleming meant a good deal by 'playing the game fairly,' and 'good form.' He had owed much to Gordon, and still more to his Tutor's sympathy and wisdom, not forgetting the sight of all his silver cups and boating trophies from Henley and elsewhere. And thus it was that a Greek nature, coloured by Scotch Puritanism and English truth and culture, grew to be something very good and useful, which, in a graceful person, is most attractive, and leaves lasting memories.

And yet Fulton was not far wrong, when he wrote to Arnold, who had left Rugby suddenly, vowing that his villa on the Caucasus was not to be purchased there : 'Fleming is leaving for Oxford. I am loth to lose him, and anxious as to his future. These Greek natures—you know them well, Arnold—with their strange power of fascination, their athletic keenness, and enjoyment of the present hour, seem made for spoiling. Why care for learning, when the playing-fields are so attractive? Why think of the morrow, when to-day is so delightful? What say you? Cannot the Delphic oracle give us some word of counsel, to guard our young Athenians

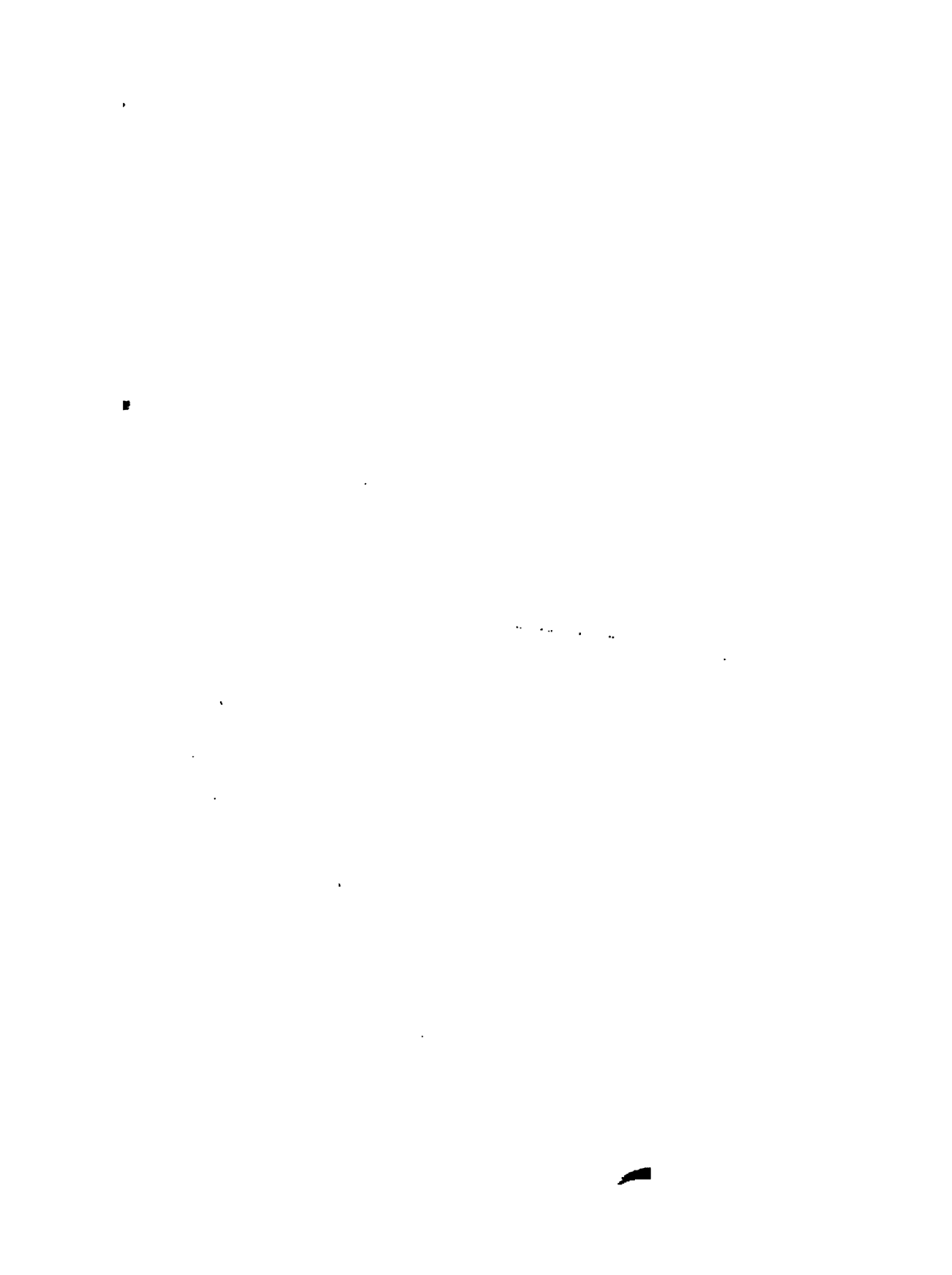
from false ideals, from caring only for bodily grace and excellence, and to give them nobler ambitions than those of mere Olympian rewards?’

What Arnold answered is not recorded. In these days, when athletics are so paramount; when the Castalian spring is probably let to a French restaurant; and when the Priestess, if there be one, would prefer a drive to Olympia in a tandem to all the care for questions of politics and philosophy which perplex the best and wisest in her country, it may be imagined what the answer would be. But then, when Fulton was writing the Characters of his pupils, which he did slowly and thoughtfully, as if he saw the eyes that were to read them, and knew the hearts that were to feel them, the tide of athleticism, now so full and brimming, was only on the turn. And yet, recalling Colonel Fleming’s letter, he felt that a little blunt and plain speaking would not seriously disturb the breakfast of the British parent; and so he wrote of some of them, ‘No care for books!’ ‘Too fond of athletics!’ ‘Seems to think and speak of nothing but cricket.’ Only of Fleming he wrote: ‘His love of athletics is so closely allied to the love of excellence, that I believe it will end in something better and greater in the long run. And as he has the rare gift of making others follow his lead and guidance, I trust he will make this love of excellence the rule of other lives as well as his own. It is a great gift, which often amazes me. We shall miss him here greatly.’

‘We shall miss him greatly.’ So wrote the Tutor,

and so, mournfully, as though they lost a friend, felt the School. A School hero, who has won all hearts by his bright leadership, is not easily replaced. He has made the position; and if, as Mackie, 'the Midge,' said of Fleming, he was 'such a Swell, all-round,' then it may be long before a new candidate for 'all the honours' can enter the arena. But, as the glamour of fancy and affection dies away, then the 'Mackies' and 'Midges,' buzzing at night round the Passage-fires, begin to take a new tone; and the new leader is said to be 'not a bad chap'; 'he might do, after all'; 'give him a chance, anyhow.'

Only, here and there, some lover of the old hero is not reconciled; and one of them, the great Bullhead, expressed this feeling in his own peculiar manner, when asked if he would return next Half, by saying curtly, 'No, he wouldn't come back to follow another brute; he would leave.' And this thoroughly English way of veiling admiration was understood by all, and felt to be the greatest tribute of affection that Fleming could receive. It is hard to replace a hero.





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